It Is No Longer I Who Lives. Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben on Subjectivity in the Letters of Saint Paul

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Radboud University Nijmegen
op gezag van de rector magnificus prof. dr. J.H.J.M. van Krieken,
volgens besluit van het college van decanen
in het openbaar te verdedigen op woensdag 27 juni 2018
om 10.30 uur precies

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geboren op 15 november 1988
in Breda
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Preface

For better or worse, this dissertation has been a pivotal part of life for a number of years. Doing this research, working in Nijmegen and writing this book are connected to the key moments and decisions which define who I am and what my life is like right now. For that and for all the people who were involved with this I am thankful.

In the first place I want to thank Gert-Jan van der Heiden and Ben Vedder for all their help and support throughout the years. Most of all, I want to thank them for giving me the opportunity to pursue this PhD. I also would like to thank the other members of our research project: Geurt-Henk van Kooten, Suzan Sierksma and Antonio Cimino. Their comments on my work have proven to be invaluable. Finally, I would like to thank the NWO for funding this project.

I want to thank all the teachers and fellow students whom I have met and who have taught me about philosophy and theology either through lectures or through discussions. In particular I would like to thank professor Bart Koet for all his support over the years. I would also like to thank Diederik Duzijn and Stan van Ommen for the great theological discussions we had. A special thanks goes to Eveline van der Ham who inspired me to study philosophy. In my first year as a student Eveline and I promised each other that we would thank each other in our dissertations if either of us would ever successfully write one.

I would also like to thank all my former colleagues and fellow students at the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies and the Faculty of Arts for their help, advice and general good times. I have met many people in the years working in the Erasmustower who all have played a part in my process. In particular I would like to thank Arjen Kleinherenbrink, Stefan
Schevelier, Simon Gusman, Joyce Gusman and Carli Coenen for all the philosophical discussions which I have always thought were very enjoyable. I also would like to thank all the grad students and staff at Villanova University for making my stay there so pleasant. A special thanks goes to Walter Brogan for all the help he gave both me and my wife during our stay abroad.

I am also grateful to all my new colleagues for making the transition away from an academic life such an easy step. In particular I am grateful for 'het wandelclubje' for creating a better work environment than I have ever experience before. Although I was no longer actively doing research after starting my new job, two people who work there motivated me to put the last bit of effort in this dissertation and finishing it. So thank you Anke Lameris and Wim Scheenen for motivating me to finish this even though it was no longer my priority.

Most of all, however, I would like to thank the people that have been there for me not just for his dissertation, but for everything. I would like to thank Sanne Stuur for her eternal friendship even outside the walls of academia. I want to thank my brother and parents for always being there for me and offering their unyielding support. Without them, I wouldn’t be were I am today.

Finally, I am eternally grateful to and for my wife, Eline. She has made my life so much better than I could have ever imagined. I am glad that I met you that fateful day in the bus on the way to the university. Without you this dissertation would not be finished right now and without this dissertation I would have never met you.
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**Introduction**

This dissertation engages with the so-called 'turn to Paul' in philosophy. Starting in the 1990’s a group of influential, contemporary philosophers working in the continental tradition have started reading and writing about Saint Paul. This turn to Paul is an oddity within the philosophical tradition for at least three reasons.

Firstly, Paul is traditionally seen as the founder of the dogmatic system of Christianity. This view was widely held by both philosophers and theologians before the latter half of the twentieth century. As the ‘founder of Christianity’, Paul is attributed with systematizing and consequently dogmatizing the Christian teachings. One of the most important discussion partners of the contemporary philosophers engaging with Paul is Nietzsche. Nietzsche accuses Paul of taking the original message of Christianity and distorting it. According to Nietzsche, Paul shifts the emphasis of Christ’s life away from life and towards nothingness. For Nietzsche, Paul is the founder of Christianity, which is – as Nietzsche famously claims – a Platonism for the masses. It is a movement that denies life itself. In Nietzsche’s view Christianity is nihilistic. Nietzsche has a very negative evaluation of this. For him, this nihilism is precisely what is wrong with Christianity. The contemporary philosophers working on Paul agree with Nietzsche’s analysis,

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3 Ibid., 39.
but they do not agree with his evaluation. The fact that Paul develops a way of living which can see that this life is not all there is, is — as we will see — the reason they turn to Paul. It is, however, a very odd turn of events that these philosophers have started reading Paul precisely because of what Nietzsche would call Paul’s nihilism.

Secondly, the turn to Paul is not the work of a philosophical school or a collaborative effort of philosophers. Rather, a number of philosophers have, all at generally the same moment, started reading Paul. These philosophers are Martin Heidegger, Stanislas Breton, Jacob Taubes, Daniel Boyarin, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek and Giorgio Agamben. Of course, these philosophers influenced each other and some even respond to the others’ works on Paul, but the interesting and odd part is that these philosophers each engage with Paul from different backgrounds and with a different conceptual focus. The turn to Paul does not revolve around a single philosophical theme. Each philosopher employs Paul to address themes which are relevant for their own work.

Martin Heidegger was the first philosopher within the turn to Paul. In 1920-1921, he held a lecture course dealing with Paul. This lecture course called “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion” was first published in 1995, thereby coming to the attention of a large number of scholars. Before its publication, the lecture course was only in circulation under a number of Heidegger scholars. In this course, Heidegger focuses mainly on the transformation of life and of temporality, in the form of eschatology, in Paul.

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In his 1988 book Stanislas Breton reads finds in Paul a reformulation of identity. Breton reads Paul against a political, Marxist background and finds a thinker who rethinks both personal and communal identity through the use of allegory and hermeneutics.

Jacob Taubes also interprets Paul as a political thinker. In *The Political Theology of Paul* which was published in 1993 he focuses on the Jewish background of Paul. He engages mainly with Paul’s view on the law and pushes this towards a discussion with political, philosophical thinkers, such as Benjamin and Schmitt. The point Taubes tries to make in his book is that Paul was an inherently political thinker.

In 1994, Daniel Boyarin published *A Radical Jew*. Contrary to what the title might suggest, Boyarin does not focus on Paul’s Jewishness, but rather on Paul’s universalism and Platonism. He argues that Paul criticized Judaism from within and tried to establish a community based on universality. Boyarin also reads Paul as a political thinker and focuses on the concepts of universalism and temporality, both as eschatology and as history.

Alain Badiou is very much indebted to Breton. His 1997 book *Saint Paul* deals with the same problem of political identity, but expands upon it. Badiou focuses on the problems of the subject and the event in Paul. In Paul, he finds a thinker who develops a theory of the event and its consequences. Badiou, then, focuses on the transformation of the subject one finds in Paul and

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how this subject is a subject of a universal truth. Badiou addresses the same themes as Breton, but in a very different and more systematic way.

Slavoj Žižek’s first engagement with Paul in 1999’s *The Ticklish Subject* is little more than an extensive review and criticism of Badiou. He agrees with many of Badiou’s points, but also radicalizes and expands upon the Lacanian aspects in Paul. In 2003 Žižek again turns to Paul, but this time employs his work in a larger engagement with Christianity. In this book, Žižek focuses on the notion of life in Paul and interprets this against a Marxist, political background.

Agamben claims to engage with Paul in *The Time That Remains*, because he is interested in the question of messianic community. Similarly to Taubes, he understands Paul a Jewish, political thinker. Agamben establishes this point, however, by focusing on the concept of temporality and identity. Although Agamben has a similar interest as Taubes, he ends up making an entirely different argument.

The third and final reason why the ‘turn to Paul’ was such an odd event is that Paul is a religious thinker. All of these philosophers are part of a philosophical tradition which had, up until very recently, generally abandoned religion. This is also in the some of the authors mentioned above who read Paul within a secular framework and avoid any almost any mention of God and the divine in their readings of Paul. Given this general aversion to religion within the continental philosophical tradition, the turn to Paul becomes all the more odd.

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Given these three reasons, why, then, did these philosophers turn to Paul? Of course, there are numerous individual, biographical reasons for these philosophers to turn to Paul. More generally, however, there are at least three intellectual phenomena which have contributed in some way to Paul being a topic within philosophy.

Firstly, in the latter half of the twentieth century a number of new avenues for studying Paul have opened up. Traditionally, the interpretation of Paul was the task of Christian theologians and exegetes. Paul was only read in a scholarly fashion within these disciplines and the way Paul was dealt with was also fairly uniform. This changes in 1977, when E.P. Sanders published his book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. In this book, Sanders argues for understanding Paul through his own self-understanding as a first century Jew. In this approach, Paul’s Jewish roots as Saul of Tarsus were put on the agenda. This book set the tone for the interpretation of Paul after that. It started what thereafter has been called the ‘new perspective on Paul’. This new perspective entailed understanding Paul starting from his own Jewish background.

Sanders’ book did more than just start this ‘new perspective’. His book opened the possibility for Paul to be read in a completely different way. After Sanders, we see a proliferation of different perspectives on Paul. Paul is interpreted from the perspective of Judaism, liberation theology, feminism, rhetoric and scripture. The letters of Paul provide occasion for a wealth of

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13 Ibid., 10.
different interpretations. Paul became a figure of much debate and of many interpretations. Considered from this context, it is not strange that Paul has become a topic within philosophy.

Secondly, philosophy is related to religion. Continental philosophy has a long tradition of thinking about religion.\textsuperscript{16} For philosophers such as Kant, Hegel and Kierkegaard religion is an important topic within their work, but one can even argue that religion plays an equally large role in the work of thinkers such as Nietzsche, Marx and Freud who vehemently reject religion. Even, or maybe better: especially, for thinkers who reject religion, it plays a central role in their thought. In some way, philosophy is related to religion and philosophy cannot deny this relation.\textsuperscript{17} This realization serves as at least a partial explanation for the turn to Paul.

The mere turn to religion, however, does not yet explain why philosophers have turned to Paul specifically. Why Paul and not another figure, maybe even from another religion. This is all the more surprising when one realizes that, at least traditionally, philosophers turned to the Gospel of John with its far more obviously philosophical nature. Even Nietzsche, the great denouncer of Christianity and especially of Saint Paul, could identify with the very human image of Jesus in Saint John’s Gospel.\textsuperscript{18} The fact that Paul is on a first glance so foreign to philosophy is the reason why philosophers precisely turn to Paul. Paul does not write in philosophical language, but his work opens up an entirely new way of thinking for these philosophers.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
Finally, the turn to Paul can be explained from the need to understand our contemporary, political situation and the modes of life itself. As we have seen, many of the philosophers involved in the turn to Paul understand Paul as a political thinker. Their claim is that Paul can help us understand our situation. This seems like a strange statement about the contemporary, secular time. With the separation of church and state, religion should have been banished from the public sphere. What, then, can Saint Paul, who was undeniably a religious thinker, offer for the understanding of the secularized political order?

Saint Paul is regarded as not only the founder of organized Christianity, but also as the founder of Europe’s universal identity. 19 This means that Paul’s letters are founding texts for the contemporary Western socio-political order. Loose notes that it is no surprise that philosophers precisely return to these founding texts now, in a time in which certain forms of universalism, ideas of cultural supremacy and the occurrence of fundamentalism are political problems. 20 Paul’s letters show a way of thinking, which is radically opposed to all forms of identity politics and exclusionary thinking. This can be seen in texts such as 1 Corinthians 1:17-29 and Galatians 3:28.

After the ‘turn to Paul’ by these influential thinkers, there has also been a surge of secondary scholarship on this phenomenon. Starting from the early 2000’s – after most of the works I mentioned above were translated into English – many scholars started engaging with these philosophers who read Paul. What is at stake here is not in the first place a philosophical interpretation of Paul, but rather the question of why these philosophers turn to Paul and what they find in his letters. This dissertation is itself part of that scholarship. In the chapters on the individual philosophers, I will discuss the scholarship that deals

19 Badiou, Saint Paul, 7–8.
with the individual readings of Paul by Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben. In this introduction, however, I want to give an overview of the scholarship on the turn to Paul as such and situate my dissertation within it.

Within the scholarship, the turn to Paul in philosophy is approached in three ways. Firstly, there are a number of works that try to understand why these contemporary philosophers have turned to Paul and what they find in his letters. These works are usually overviews that try to discover general trends within the turn to Paul. 21

Secondly, a number of scholars compare the readings of Paul of two or more different philosophers with each other and try to find a common ground between them. These works have a more systematic approach to the Paul readings. These works focus heavily on a particular topic or concept. 22


Thirdly, some works deal with the turn to Paul by collecting a number of articles dealing with individual philosophers reading Paul in one book or journal issue. The individual articles go in-depth into the work of one of the philosophers. These articles are then related to each other in the introduction or editorial. These works try to make sense of the turn to Paul as a whole through analyses of the individual philosophers.23

My dissertation is mostly part of the second group. I take three readings of Paul and focus on the same concepts in each one of them. What distinguishes my dissertation from most works in the second group – and consequently, what the added value of my work is for the scholarship as a whole – is that it takes the approach of the third group. Each chapter goes in-depth into one of the authors. Only at the end do I compare them. This leads to a much more systematic reading and a more detailed comparison.

This dissertation does not deal with the entire turn to Paul, but only with one specific concept which is at stake for a number of the philosophers


involved in this turn, namely the question of subjectivity. The main question I set out to address in this dissertation is: how do Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben rethink the subject through their interpretation of the letters of Paul? As I will show, the concept of subjectivity in Paul is related to the concepts of temporality, community and world. So, the main question further invokes three sub questions, namely how does this reinterpretation affect the subject’s 1) temporality 2) world and 3) community.

This question immediately raises another question: why those three authors? As I myself have shown the problems of identity and subjectivity are also at stake in the engagements with Paul of some of the other thinkers, such as Breton and Taubes. The primary reason for this is that one has to limit oneself in a project such as this. Addressing this question in other thinkers would also have been possible. There are, however, two reasons why I have made the choice for these three authors and not others.

Firstly, Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben together cover a wide range of perspectives on Paul. Each of these three thinkers has his own unique approach to Paul’s texts and his own primary interests. Furthermore, in the case of Badiou and Agamben their points of view encompass those of other authors. Badiou is very close to Žižek in the way he approaches Paul. With regards to the theme of subjectivity, Badiou also takes many of Breton’s ideas and builds upon them. Similarly, Agamben’s book can be understood as a further elaboration of Taubes. Especially on the concepts covered in this dissertation Agamben’s work is more a continuation of Taubes than anything else. So, even though they obviously do not represent all of the perspectives on Paul, these three thinkers do cover a majority of the points of view on Paul.

Secondly, these three authors lend themselves very well for an endeavor such as this, because they respond to each other. Or rather, Agamben
responds to Heidegger and Badiou and discusses their engagements with Paul. Although Heidegger and Badiou have little overlap on first glance, Badiou does refer to Heidegger's criticism of ontotheology in his reading of Paul. Through Agamben's reading of Paul it becomes clear that there is a discussion going on with all three authors. As I will show in this dissertation, that discussion revolves around subjectivity. Because of this, these three authors are the obvious choice for a project in which Pauline subjectivity is central.

So, in the following chapters I will establish how Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben interpret Pauline subjectivity through their reading of Paul's letters. All three explicitly address the question of the subject in Paul and, as I will argue, this question is central to their individual understandings of Paul. It has to be noted, however, that the three philosophers do not all explicitly relate their accounts of Pauline subjectivity to temporality, community and world. The most notable omissions in this sense are the fact that Heidegger does not explicitly address the concept of community and that Badiou does not address temporality. In the chapters on Heidegger and Badiou, I will show how these concepts are still implicitly present in their reading of Paul or how an interpretation of these concepts is a consequence of their interpretation of subjectivity. So, even though the three philosophers do not explicitly address all topics I discuss, one can still find these concepts in their work. Simply put, all three accounts of Pauline subjectivity affect temporality, community and world, but Heidegger and Badiou just do not explicate this in every case.

Now, what is this subjectivity? I will explain this based on two Pauline texts which are programmatic for this dissertation. The first text is Galatians 2:19-20 in which Paul writes that:

19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; 20 and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in
me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (NRSV)

This text clearly shows what is at stake for these philosophers in reading Paul. Christ's arrival definitively changed life. What is important in this regard is that Paul writes about a change in life. This change, however, was a change internal to life. Paul here clearly states that the emphasis of life is not shifted away towards a different life in a different world, pace Nietzsche, but that life in this world has changed. Paul, then, is not a thinker of ontological dualism and of transcendence, but rather a thinker of immanent subjectivity.

It should be noted that I intentionally employ the term 'subjectivity' instead of the more common 'subject'. The term 'subject' has a strong connotation of being a static entity, which has a fully independent existence. I employ subjectivity to denote a dynamic process in which the situation - in the broadest sense of the word - in which life is lived, interacts with and changes life. As we will see, one of the most important aspects of subjectivity is that it is enactive. In other words: subjectivity denotes a structure according to which life is lived. Simply put, subjectivity denotes life as it is lived concretely, that is: in a body, in a world, with other people etc. In the course of this dissertation, I will use subjectivity and Pauline subjectivity interchangeably, denoting the form of subjectivity that Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben develop through their reading of Paul.

Pauline subjectivity entails a transformation of subjectivity. It is a becoming a subject by what has happened. The transformation of subjectivity is not a transformation from being a subject towards being a different kind of

24 Badiou does use the term 'subject' in his oeuvre. He does this, because it is his goal to rehabilitate this concept. I believe, however, that avoiding this term and its implications is a more fruitful approach to the problem of subjectivity.
subject. Rather, it is a shift from being to becoming, that is: Pauline subjectivity denotes a process of transformation. Life changes in such a way according to Paul that one becomes a subject. The transformation of subjectivity can best be understood as a subjectivation.

We can see this point very clearly in the work of Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben. For Heidegger, the transformation in subjectivity entails that being becomes a having-become. This means that one is no longer determined by what one is, but rather by what one has become. This is not a different kind of static identity. Rather, it is the process in which one finds oneself when one is living in the expectation of the end. It is a life lived in the continuous awareness that this life will end soon. As such, it is a life which is changing.

In Badiou’s view, the transformation in subjectivity is also an immanent transformation of life. It entails persevering and being faithful to the transformation of life which has started with the event. Where for Heidegger one shifts away from the old life into a new life, for Badiou the transformation of subjectivity means finding a new way of living while at the same time retaining the old one. Becoming a subject means living life through the “not ... but”. Life is changed in that it should no longer be led by its desires, but should try to do the work of the truth. The problem is, however, that the desires do not just disappear. Badiou’s interpretation of the concept of life as he finds it in Paul, is a life which is torn between the flesh and the spirit, desires and the truth. Because of this, the transformation of subjectivity is a continual process.

Agamben makes a similar point about subjectivity. He explains what Paul says about life by introducing the concept of the remnant. The remnant is, in the context of subjectivity, a core of potentiality which is inexhaustible. The transformation of life in Paul should, then, be understood in terms of potentiality. Transformed subjectivity is no longer determined by its actuality,
that is: by what it is, but by its potentiality. Similar to Heidegger, Agamben emphasizes that static being is replaced by a becoming.

The second programmatic text explains how the change in subjectivity that Paul speaks about has been effected by the arrival of Christ. Christ came and changed the conditions of possibility for life. Paul expresses this most clearly in 1 Corinthians 7:29-31. In this text, he gives a brief sketch of the contours of a subjectivity that has been changed. 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 reads:

29 I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

This text clarifies three important aspects of the shift in subjectivity. Firstly, the change in subjectivity is not a matter of any single person, but rather this change is related to other people who have had the same experience. It is not just Paul’s transformation, but also that of his ‘brothers and sisters’. The subjectivity about which Paul speaks, then always implies a community. Secondly, the time that is left has grown short. Christ came and changed life, but also announced that life would soon end. This radically changes the temporality related to this new subjectivity. Finally, the change in subjectivity entails a change in one’s relation to the world. One can no longer live life and experience the world in the same way.

This text is the second programmatic Pauline text for this dissertation. From this text, it becomes clear why the question of subjectivity in Paul leads to the questions of temporality, community and world. The concept of subjectivity intimates the other three concepts. This dissertation revolves
around these four concepts. Even though the aim of this dissertation is to
discover how Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben interpret these concepts in
Paul, I use them from the very beginning before even discussing any of these
philosophers or their work. Therefore, it is important to give provisional
definitions of subjectivity, temporality, community and world. These are
definitions which I will use to address my main question and as such will guide
this research. For each concept, I will give a provisional overview of how
Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben understand it in their readings of Paul. I do
this to show how these concepts play a role for all of these philosophers.

Firstly, I will discuss how I use subjectivity. I have already given an
account of subjectivity in Paul and briefly sketched how this plays a role in the
work of Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben. As will become clear from this
dissertation, however, the change in subjectivity can be further understood in
terms of non-identity and contingency. Non-identity denotes the fact that
Pauline subjectivity is not an identity marker that is applied to a person. Rather,
the transformation in subjectivity revokes every identity. Pauline subjectivity
always eludes every attempt to be solidified in a static identity. The aspect of
non-identity returns in the concepts of community and world. As we will see,
non-identity entails no longer taking on the shape of the world. It means no
longer necessarily conforming to what the world expects. Non-identity is
related to community in that identity can no longer serve as the basis for
community.

The second feature of Pauline subjectivity is its contingency.
Contingency has two aspects, which can both be found in 1 Corinthians 7. On
the one hand, it is related to calling. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 7: 17-21:

17 However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned,
to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches. 18 Was anyone at the
time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything. Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called. 21 Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. Even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever. (NRSV)

In this text, which will return in this dissertation a number of times, Paul claims that the conditions in which one lives are changed. One’s calling in life, that is, the situation one finds oneself in, has been revoked and changed by what happened with Christ. Paul mentions a number of conditions which, in his day, determined one’s life, such as being a slave or being circumcised. Paul’s claim is that these conditions are no longer the entire story about one’s life. As a consequence everything one was certain of is no longer valid. This means that life itself becomes uncertain. Now, instead of denying and trying to overcome the insecurity that is inherent in life itself by forming some new form of stable identity, Pauline subjectivity accepts this insecurity. In this way, life becomes contingent.

The other aspect of contingency is found somewhat later in 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, which I have already discussed above as the text which summarizes Pauline subjectivity. Contingency is specifically found in verse 31 in which Paul mentions that “the form of the world is passing away”. Not only has life become contingent, but the world itself has as well. This form of contingency is linked to the notion of kosmos. The world, and therefore life which is lived within it, is no longer ruled by necessity. Pauline subjectivity resists against any and all attempts to make it follow pre-given rules. It is not necessarily one way or the other, but rather it denies necessity as such. In both of these ways, Pauline subjectivity can be said to be contingent: it denies
necessity and accepts insecurity. Contingency is intimately related to the concept of temporality. Pauline temporality means living life towards the end of time which will come at an undetermined moment in the future. This effects a radical contingency in life, because it wrestles control away from it.

The second concept that I will provisionally define is temporality. Temporality, in the context of this dissertation, does not denote an objective idea of time. It is not mathematical time or the time of the clock. It is also not the time in the sense of seasons and days, which pass. All these conceptions of time can only be understood with regards to an external referent. While all of these conceptions are interesting in their own regard, the Pauline conception of temporality is decidedly different. For Paul, temporality is that specific instance of time, which has started with the first arrival of Christ and will end with the second arrival that had been announced. Pauline subjectivity lives in this time, which has grown short. Because of this imminent end of time, the temporality of Pauline subjectivity is characterized by its finitude. Pauline subjectivity lives in relation to the end of time itself.

For Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben the change in temporality is related to the fact that a new time or era began with Christ. Heidegger understands temporality in relation to the second coming of Christ at the end of time. Paul announces that this will happen and this changes life. Heidegger emphasizes this. For Heidegger, Pauline temporality means living in a time in which time is ending. This changes life itself. Life becomes marked by contingency, because it will end at some undetermined point in the near future.

Badiou’s emphasis does not lie on a future event, such as the second coming. Temporality is, for Badiou, related to an event in the past, namely the crucifixion, death and especially resurrection of Christ. The resurrection breaks open the world and establishes a universal truth. This truth changes temporality
in a strange way. Pauline subjectivity, which has been established by this
resurrection event, has to live in such a way that it instates a future in which the
truth will have been true. It lives from a design for a future which it wants to
establish as a reality.

Agamben takes an intermediate position between Heidegger and
Badiou in a certain sense. For Agamben, Pauline temporality is the time which
began with the constellation of crucifixion, death and resurrection and will end
with the return of Christ. Time is the time in between these events. Because of
these two limits to time, it is quite literally the time which remains. Because of
this finite nature, this period of time is different from all other time. It is
different in that it is, like subjectivity, characterized by being a remnant in
which potentiality supersedes actuality.

Thirdly, I will discuss community. With community, I do not just mean
political community. While the concept of community that the philosophers
find in Paul does have strong political connotations, community essentially
denotes the fact that Pauline subjectivity is not a solitary affair. Paul’s primary
activity in his life was founding Christian communities, and his letters always
address communities, except for Philemon. For Paul, Christianity is impossible
without community. The transformation of subjectivity towards Pauline
subjectivity is something that has happened to one single person. Rather, other
people have also experienced this transformation. This means that the
conditions of Pauline subjectivity, namely contingency and non-identity, are
always shared with other people. The provisional conception of community,
then, is the idea that the transformation of subjectivity never happens in
isolation. Pauline subjectivity implies other people who have had the same
experience and with whom one forms a community, which is not based on any
identity or any necessity.
In his analysis of Pauline subjectivity as having-become, Heidegger emphasizes the communal nature of early Christian life. The transformation of subjectivity intimates other people. The transformation is always a communal transformation simply because the proclamation, which transforms subjectivity, is always aimed at multiple people.

Badiou takes an entirely different approach to the concept of community in Paul. For Badiou community is related to universalism. The resurrection establishes a truth which is universal. This means that it is open to all. Anyone can undergo the Pauline transformation of subjectivity. The effect of this transformation is that these people start doing the work of the truth. This work is done by everyone together as a universal community based on this work.

Agamben’s approach to community takes yet another point of departure in Paul. Agamben begins with Paul’s suspension of the law. Agamben’s claim is that the law instates identity and that community is traditionally based on this identity. Because identity is suspended through the suspension of the law, community is also suspended. He then develops a new idea of community which is not based on identity, but on living together in the same way.

Finally, I will turn to the concept of the world. In this dissertation, ‘world’ denotes the world in which one lives, of which Paul in 1 Corinthians says that it is passing away. This concept has two separate but related components. On the one hand, there is a subjective component. Everyone has an experience of one’s environment, the objects one interacts with and the people close to someone. This experience is changed in the transformation towards Pauline subjectivity. The way one relates to one’s surroundings is no longer the same for Pauline subjectivity. In this dissertation, I will refer to this
as the anthropological dimension of the world. On the other hand, there is an ontological component. The reason why the experience of the world has changed is that the world itself has changed. As we have seen with temporality, time itself is ending. This radically affects the world. The experience of the world has changed, because the world itself is ending. When the concept of world is discussed in this dissertation, then, it denotes the fact that Pauline subjectivity has to relate itself to the fact that it lives in a world that it believes to be passing away. It is a relating oneself to a world that is ending.

Heidegger focuses exclusively on the ‘anthropological’ aspect of the world, that is: Heidegger is solely interested in the question of how one should deal with and live in the world after the transformation of subjectivity. Central in this for Heidegger is the concept of the hōs mē. Life should be lived ‘as if not’. This means that one should live accepting that the world is, along with its time, passing away.

Badiou, on the other hand, places more emphasis on the ‘ontological’ dimension change in the world. For Badiou, the event changes the order of the world itself. The event does not directly change the world, but rather it tasks the people who become its subjects with the task of instating a new world. This new world does not follow the logic of the old world, but rather it is a world of the truth.

Agamben again takes a nuanced, or one might even say ambiguous, middle ground between Heidegger and Badiou. Ontologically the world has changed through the suspension of the law. This suspension not only suspends identity, but also the actuality of the world. Everything which is, is related to what it potentially could have been. This suspends the importance of that people deem important. Because of this, Pauline subjectivity has to relate itself
to a world which is potential. For this, Agamben also takes recourse to the ḥōs mē. He sees the ḥōs mē as a way to relate to the world in its potentiality.

As we have seen in this brief, provisional overview the concepts of subjectivity, temporality, community and world can be found in Heidegger’s Badiou’s and Agamben’s readings of Paul. Furthermore, Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben each takes a unique approach to these problems. This is to show that there is broad spectrum of points of view on these same Pauline concepts. In this dissertation, I will examine this constellation in greater detail and show what we can learn from all these different perspectives about these concepts.

I want to conclude this introduction with a number of methodological and stylistic choices I have made. Firstly, I made choices concerning terminology. For the most part, I will follow each philosopher in their own vocabulary and terminology when I am discussing their analyses of Paul. Next to that, however, I will also introduce my own terminology and concepts. I do this for two reasons. On the one hand, it will allow me to strengthen the implicit comparison during the first three chapters and it will allow me to properly make the explicit synthesis in the final chapter. I will, for so far as possible, let the philosophers speak. On the other hand, using a unified terminology will allow me to tease out concepts that might not be explicitly present, such as the ones mentioned above. Doing this opens up new avenues of investigation that would otherwise have been lost.

Secondly, I want to make a few remarks about the structure of this dissertation. After this chapter, this dissertation will follow a very strict and rigid pattern. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 are devoted to the Paul-interpretations of respectively Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben. I have chosen this order simply, because it is the chronological order of appearance of these texts. Since later texts can be, and in the case of Agamben are, informed by earlier texts, but not
the other way around, this seemed an obvious choice. In each of the chapters, I will address each of these philosophers in their own right and – with a caveat I will discuss shortly – in their own terms. I have done this to ensure that the differences of the three approaches get the attention they deserve, since many commentators who read multiple Paul-readings in one go tend to jump to comparisons, before giving the philosophers a chance to speak, so to say. This is also the reason why, in each case, I discuss the scholarship. This allows me to give an in-depth reading of all three philosophers. To avoid this pitfall of forgetting the individual differences, I have decided to delay most of the comparison to the final chapter.

I do, however, make an implicit comparison between the three accounts in chapters 1 to 3. In these chapters, I force the Paul-interpretations of the three philosophers into a structure which is not necessarily their own. In each chapter, I begin with an introduction and an overview of the secondary scholarship. Thereafter I discuss the philosopher’s conception of Paul. Then I turn to the methodological background against which to situate the reading of Paul. The discussion of Pauline subjectivity and its effects on temporality, world and community follow this. I will end each chapter with a brief summary and a foreshadowing of the next chapters. In the final chapter, I try to reach a synthetic account of Pauline subjectivity that is informed by the three readings I discussed in chapters 1 to 3. This chapter again follows the same structure.

Thirdly, this dissertation takes a theoretical, hermeneutical approach to these authors. I am not primarily interested in the historical background of

Heidegger's, Badiou's or Agamben's engagements with Paul, nor in the historical background of Paul's letters. I do, however, discuss these points when it is needed. Rather, I am interested in the systematic accounts of subjectivity that these authors give and how this can lead to a reinterpretation of the concepts that are involved. I establish this point by delving into the texts on Paul and trying to uncover the meaning hermeneutically. I do this in order to make a theoretical, systematic point about subjectivity as such.

Finally, I want to briefly discuss my use of sources. Even though this dissertation deals with Paul and Pauline subjectivity, it is a philosophical work and not a theological one. With this claim, I do not want to make any evaluation or even any hard distinction between the two approaches. I do, however, believe that theology and philosophy are two different domains. Theology, as I understand it, takes the existence of God as a starting point and then addresses the question of human existence as it relates itself to the divine. This leads Heidegger to call theology a positive science.26 Philosophy, on the other hand, attempts to give an interpretation of life based on life itself. A theological reading can have great philosophical value and vice versa. This dissertation is, however, philosophy, because it does not deal with God, the divine or man's relation to either of these. Nor is this work biblical exegesis, because, paradoxically, it does not deal directly with Paul's letters, but rather with the interpretation of Paul's letters by philosophers.

The primary literature of this dissertation is the three philosophical readings of Paul. Paul's letters are effectively literature zero. They are the texts on which the philosophers comment, but which I only address through them. I take this approach, because I am interested in the philosophical account of

Pauline subjectivity. The philosophers have no interest in the historical or ‘real’ Paul. This is especially noticeable in the lack of theological, cosmological and ontological import from Paul’s letters. While I follow this approach, I will at times hint at how true to Paul the philosophers might be and at the topics which the philosophers might have overlooked in their avoidance of certain aspects in Paul’s letters.
1.1. Introduction

The first of the three contemporary, philosophical interpretations of Paul, which I will discuss in this dissertation, is Heidegger’s reading of Paul in the lecture course “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion”. Seeing as I have claimed that the turn to Paul is a recent phenomenon which originated in the early 1990’s it might seem odd to start with a chapter on Heidegger, who had already been dead for 15 years before Paul became a philosophical topic. Even odder still is the fact that the text which will be discussed is a transcription of one of Heidegger’s earliest lecture courses which Heidegger taught in Freiburg in the winter semester of 1920/1921, thereby separating this text from the ‘turn to Paul’ by roughly 70 years. How did this early course come to be a founding part of the contemporary turn to Paul?

Although the text on Paul is a transcript of one of Heidegger’s earliest lecture courses, it has become known to most scholars only in 1993. \(^{27}\) In this year Theodore Kisiel published his influential book on Heidegger’s philosophical activities leading up to *Being and Time*. \(^{28}\) In this book Kisiel gives a very detailed reconstruction of the, at that moment unpublished, course

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on Paul. Two years later, this lecture course was published as part of the Heidegger Gesamtausgabe (hereafter abbreviated as GA). This has led to its official inclusion in the ‘canon’ of Heidegger’s oeuvre.

The reason why this lecture course was only first published in 1995 was that Heidegger did not prepare this material for publication. The text of the lecture course had to be constructed on the basis of the transcripts of two students. This adds a difficulty to the interpretation of this text. Although the text is presented and published as a text by Heidegger, strictly speaking, he did not write a single word of it. However, the text is a representation of Heidegger’s words. This has two ramifications for interpreting this text. Firstly, it is improper to criticize the exact formulations that are ‘used by Heidegger’. Heidegger did not ‘write’ this text; the ideas in the text are his, but the specific phrasings are not. Secondly, because the text as it was published, was based on notes in a lecture course, the text is not well written. Many connections between concepts are not explained as properly as they would have been in a text meant for publication. This leads to a text plagued by ‘gaps’, such as the abruptly aborted introduction.

Even before the publication of the “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion”, scholars have written about it, such as Kisiel in his aforementioned book. Even though this book brought Heidegger’s text to the attention of scholars, the text did not gain widespread attention in either Heidegger scholarship or philosophy as a whole until the early 2000’s. Since this time a decent number of scholars have written about this text. The texts in this scholarship can be divided into five groups.

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30 More specifically, the number of commentaries on this text saw an increase after the translation of Phänomenologie des religiöses Lebens into English in 2004.
Firstly, the text on Paul is read within the context of Heidegger’s religious background. Shortly before the lecture course on Paul, Heidegger wrote his famous letter to Engelbert Krebs. In this letter Heidegger breaks with Catholicism. Heidegger, who was raised as a Catholic, denounced the dogmatic systems of Catholicism. Through the discovery of the historicity of life, Heidegger could no longer reconcile his philosophical insights with the eternal truths of Neo-Scholastic Catholicism. However, this does not mean that Heidegger denounced Christianity. Rather, it is in certain religious thinkers – most notably Luther, Kierkegaard, Schleiermacher, Meister Eckhart and Paul – that Heidegger finds the problem of history. Heidegger developed his phenomenological approach to religion precisely through his reading of these thinkers. In this body of scholarship, Heidegger’s reading of Paul is explained as fitting in Heidegger’s personal religious struggle.

32 Ibid., 69.
Secondly, the lectures on Paul are read as a pre-cursor to *Being and Time.* In this approach, concepts in “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion” are interpreted as pre-configurations of concepts in *Being and Time.* It cannot be denied that “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion” was very important for Heidegger’s development towards *Being and Time*; however, it cannot be claimed that *Being and Time,* which Heidegger started writing three years after this course and finished another four years after that, has an influence on how Heidegger reads Paul. The simple truth is that the later Heidegger of *Being and Time* and beyond did not yet exist in 1920-21. At that point, Heidegger’s thought was in development, but he had no idea where he was heading. From the contemporary perspective, however, Heidegger’s further developments have already happened, so it is easy to see “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion” as foreshadowing *Being and Time.* As Sheehan argues, this ‘foreshortening’ of Heidegger’s temporal development should be avoided. This second way of interpreting Heidegger’s text on Paul, while very interesting in its own right, runs the risk of not seeing the specific problems that play a role in *The Phenomenology of Religious Life.*

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Thirdly, an exegetical approach is taken to "Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion". It considers the text as such and tries to explain it in its own right. The guiding question for this third group is: what did Heidegger want to say in "Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion"? The historical and religious background of this text, as well as its reception in Heidegger’s later work are only of secondary importance. The focus lies on understanding the text as a coherent whole. This approach tries to explain the text without recourse to Being and Time or other sources that are external to the text, even at points where the text becomes dense or difficult.38

Fourthly, "Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion" is interpreted in the context of philosophy of religion. In this approach Heidegger’s lectures on Paul are not read in the first place as part of Heidegger’s oeuvre and used to understand the rest of his work, but these lectures are used to recount Heidegger’s thoughts on the philosophy of religion. This approach is not centered on an author, but on a topic.39

Finally, and most importantly for this thesis, this lecture course is read as a philosophical analysis of Paul; this means that Heidegger’s text on Paul is read in the light of other philosophical interventions with Paul. As I have argued elsewhere, Heidegger’s reading of Paul has influenced most, if not all,


of the contemporary, philosophical attention for Paul.\textsuperscript{40} This is very clear in, for example, Agamben and Critchley, who explicitly comment on Heidegger.\textsuperscript{41} However, there is also a more indirect connection to others, such as Badiou, through the themes that are discussed. In this dissertation I will establish this point in more detail.

In this dissertation I will read this text as a systematic, philosophical reading of Paul. I will primarily approach Heidegger's text on Paul as an interpretation of the Pauline texts, but I will also relate Heidegger's approach to Badiou's and Agamben's readings of Paul. I will begin by briefly discussing why Heidegger reads Paul (1.2). Next, I will discuss Heidegger's methodology in reading Paul (1.3). Thereafter I will focus on the question of how Heidegger finds a new conception of subjectivity in the letters of Paul and what this subjectivity entails (1.4). Finally, I will look at how this shift in subjectivity affects the three central themes of this dissertation: temporality (1.5), world (1.6) and community (1.7).

1.2. Paul

Why does Heidegger turn to Paul? Why Paul and not the Gospels? A number of scholars have noted Luther's influence on Heidegger in this regard.\textsuperscript{42}


However, they overemphasize this point. Luther did influence Heidegger, but Heidegger’s philosophy of religion is not Lutheran as these scholars claim. Biographically, it is clear that Heidegger was in a religious struggle in the period in which he gave the lecture course on Paul. He indicates this in his letters to his parents and in his letter to Engelbert Krebs.\footnote{Thomas Sheehan, “Reading a Life: Heidegger and Hard Times,” in The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger, ed. Charles Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 71–72.} Heidegger was raised a Catholic, but because of his marriage to the protestant Elfride Petri and his reading of Luther, Heidegger converted to Protestantism in 1919.\footnote{Ibid., 70.} Through his reading of Luther and, more specifically, his reading of Paul through Luther, Heidegger developed intellectually away from Catholicism. About this he writes to Krebs:

> Epistemological insights extending to a theory of historical knowledge have made the system of Catholicism problematic and unacceptable to me, but not Christianity and metaphysics – these, though, in a new sense.\footnote{Ibid., 71–72.}

However, Heidegger’s religious Lutheranism does not imply an intellectual Lutheranism. Even though Heidegger was inspired by Luther and, as we will see, he shares Luther’s urge to return to an original form of Christianity that is not dogmatic, Heidegger does not accept the system of Lutheranism as an alternative to the Catholicism he breaks with. He dismisses it as too dogmatic.\footnote{Heidegger, The Phenomenology of Religious Life, 47.} As he states:

> The letter to the Galatians was significant for the young Luther; along with the letter to the Romans, it became a dogmatic fundament. Luther and Paul are,
religiously speaking, the most radical opposites. There is a commentary by Luther on the letter to the Galatians. Yet we must free ourselves from Luther’s standpoint. Luther sees Paul from out of Augustine. 47

Heidegger is very clear that his reading of Paul is not a Lutheran reading. However, Luther did influence Heidegger’s method of reading Paul. With this I mean that Heidegger does not copy the content of Luther’s reading of Paul, but that Heidegger takes Luther’s method and applies it to philosophy. Benjamin Crowe has very clearly shown that Luther influences Heidegger’s method of destruction. 48 In “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion” this manifests itself in the fact that Heidegger tries to read Paul without preconceptions. Heidegger does not read Paul in any dogmatic way. 49 Nor does Heidegger read Paul through the lens of Greek metaphysics. 50

So, if not because of Luther, why does Heidegger read Paul? Heidegger is interested in Paul, because Paul was someone for whom his religion was completely and unavoidably embedded in his life. Paul did not write treatises about theology, nor did he tell stories about Jesus and the Christian religion. Rather, he writes from his personal religious engagement. This is what Heidegger calls primordial Christianity (Urchristentum). This term, which Heidegger takes from the theological and historical scholarship, gains a philosophical meaning in Heidegger’s work. Primordial Christianity is a Christianity that is inseparable from one’s own lived experience and this lived experience is what Paul tries to convey in his letters. Although primordial Christianity is, according to Heidegger, Christianity in the form closest to its

47 Ibid.
49 Heidegger, The Phenomenology of Religious Life, 47.
50 Ibid., 67.
origin, this is — interestingly enough — not in the first place a historical claim. Rather, primordial Christianity is a specific way of living Christianity, which Heidegger finds in Paul. Now, Heidegger’s aim is to gain access to a primordial Christianity in which a more original access to religious life is possible. This access can only be gained by engaging with a life that lives its religion. This is exactly what Heidegger finds in Paul: an account of a lived religious life.

Heidegger is primarily interested in primordial Christianity, because it has not forgotten the original connection between life and philosophy. According to Heidegger, there is an original, intellectual breakthrough to life itself in primordial Christianity.51 This breakthrough, however, was immediately covered up by the incorporation of Greek metaphysics into Christianity.52 Primordial Christianity is Christianity in its original form, the form it had in the first century CE. This form of Christianity is an expression of the concrete religious experience of the first Christians. The breakthrough of primordial Christianity, however, is not limited to early Christianity alone. Although the breakthrough itself had taken place in early Christianity, a number of thinkers have also seen this breakthrough and can also be considered to be part of primordial Christianity. These thinkers — about whom Heidegger admits to be heavily indebted to — include Kierkegaard, Luther, Schleiermacher, Meister Eckhart and the Spanish mystics.53 As is common to Heidegger, he wants to return to the most original expression of a certain insight or problem. This is the reason why in his later years Heidegger addresses Plato, Aristotle and even later the pre-Socratics. It is my contention

that his desire to return to a more original expression of life is also the reason Heidegger reads Paul.

In Paul, then, Heidegger found a more original expression of life itself. This is a completely different form of life from both Paul’s contemporary situation as well as Heidegger’s situation. In Paul’s primordial Christianity, then, Heidegger finds life as it is lived in a different way. I will establish what this way entails in the course of this chapter. As I have already mentioned in the introduction, in this thesis I will call this a new subjectivity even though Heidegger does not use this term himself.⁵⁴

1.3. Philosophical background

Heidegger begins his course on Paul with a rather long introduction on method, which Heidegger had planned to be even longer. The students, however, expected a course on Paul, not one on philosophical method. At some point during the tenth hour of the course some of the students who did not major in philosophy interrupted the course. It is not clear what exactly happened, but Heidegger abruptly broke off his methodological introduction and moved on to a topic within the philosophy of religion, namely the letters of Paul.⁵⁵ At this point Heidegger remarks:

Philosophy, as I understand it, is in a difficulty. The listener in other lectures is assured, from the beginning on: in art history lectures he can see pictures; in

⁵⁴ Heidegger usually uses Christian facticity to refer to what I call the new or Christian subjectivity. This new subjectivity, even though I will call it Christian with Heidegger, is neither necessarily religious or Christian in any contemporary sense of the word. It is simply a name for this new, Pauline subjectivity.

others he gets his money’s worth for his exams. In philosophy, it is otherwise, and I cannot change that, for I did not invent philosophy. I would, however, like to save myself from this calamity and thus break off these so abstract considerations, and lecture to you, beginning in the next session, on history; and indeed I will, without further consideration for the starting-point and method, take a particular concrete phenomenon as the point of departure, however for me under the presupposition that you will misunderstand the entire study from beginning to end.56

Heidegger’s crucial and slightly cynical remark to the students after their interruption is that they will be completely unable to understand anything he will say afterwards about the phenomenology of religion. Even though he probably partly remarked this out of indignation, it does raise an interesting question: why can Heidegger say this? Why did he think it was necessary to start with an introduction on method? What does he do in this introduction?

The goal of Heidegger’s methodological introduction is to demarcate his approach from contemporary approaches to religion. His phenomenological approach is distinguished from psychological, historical, dogmatic, religious, theological and scientific approaches. He even opposes his phenomenological approach to religion to contemporary, philosophical approaches to religion, in the work of – according to Heidegger – the most influential thinker in philosophy of religion, Ernst Troeltsch.57

Heidegger begins his introduction by opposing philosophy to science. He states:

It is necessary to determine the meaning of words of the lecture’s announcement preliminarily. This necessity is grounded in the peculiarity of philosophical

57 Ibid., 14–21.
concepts. In the specific scientific disciplines, concepts are determined through their integration into a material complex; and the more familiar this context is, the more exactly its concepts can be fixed. Philosophical concepts, on the contrary, are vacillating, vague, manifold, and fluctuating, as is shown in the alteration of philosophical standpoints.\footnote{Ibid., 3.}

Immediately Heidegger opposes the common view that philosophy is a science. Philosophy and science operate in completely different ways. Science, and by this Heidegger chiefly means the natural sciences, have a totality to which their concepts neatly belong. Every science describes a domain of reality and every concept it uses fits neatly into that whole. This is different for philosophy. Philosophical concepts are fluctuating and vague precisely because philosophy does not have a domain that is fully formed and proper to it. Rather, philosophy is the explication of factical life itself. Heidegger states:

> The problem of the self-understanding of philosophy has always been taken too lightly. If one grasps this problem radically, one finds that philosophy arises from factical life experience. And within factical life experience philosophy returns back into factical life experience. The concept of factical life experience is fundamental. The designation of philosophy as cognitive, rational comportment says nothing at all.\footnote{Ibid., 6-7.}

The concept of life is central for the early Heidegger.\footnote{Scott Campbell, \textit{The Early Heidegger’s Philosophy of Life: Facticity, Being, and Language} (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 3.} It is central, because if one understands philosophy correctly it turns out to be the explication of life itself. In Heidegger’s view, philosophy explicates life from within life towards life.

Firstly, Heidegger's claim is not just that philosophy is the explication of life, but also that it needs to start in and return to life. Philosophy cannot do without life at any point. With this, Heidegger rejects the idea of philosophy as a purely theoretical, cognitive endeavor. Secondly, philosophy can only take life seriously if it is phenomenology in Heidegger's sense of the word and not the Husserlian variant. The question is: how can the method of phenomenology help philosophy to explicate life in a proper way?

To answer this, the concept of life first needs to be clarified. In his methodological introduction, Heidegger discusses life experience as a concept. It is life as it is experienced in living. This already indicates the most crucial element of life for Heidegger: life is enacted. It can only be understood from out of its being lived.61 About life experience Heidegger writes:

Life experience is more than mere experience which takes cognizance of. It designates the whole active and passive pose of the human being toward the world: If we view factical life experience only in regard to the experienced content, we designate what is experienced — what is lived as experience [das Erlebte] — as the “world,” not the “object.” “World” is that in which one can live (one cannot live in an object).62

Heidegger emphasizes that life experience is not just a cognitive affair, but that it denotes the entire attitude of a human towards the world. Heidegger tries to understand life in its fullness. He tries to avoid reducing life experience to something cognitive. Life cannot be reduced to any single aspect of life, such as the ego, rationality or even the self. This alleged ‘essence’ of life, which philosophers have always taken to be the kernel of life, is as far removed from

61 Ibid., 2.
life experience as is possible. As Heidegger notes, no one experiences his or her own life purely theoretically.63

Only phenomenology can deal with the fact that life is more than a theoretical taking cognizance of the things that are encountered in life. This is why for Heidegger philosophy is phenomenology.64 Obviously, it is not his claim that all philosophy is phenomenology, but rather that if philosophy does not account for the fullness of life it is meaningless.

How can phenomenology do justice to life as it is lived? This will become clear by elucidating Heidegger's phenomenology. What is phenomenology according to Heidegger in this lecture course? About this Heidegger states:

What is phenomenology? What is phenomenon? Here this can be itself indicated only formally. Each experience—as experiencing, and what is experienced—can "be taken in the phenomenon," that is to say, one can ask: 1. After the original "what," that is experienced therein (content).2. After the original "how," in which it is experienced (relation).3. After the original "how," in which the relational meaning is enacted (enactment). But these three directions of sense (content-, relational-, enactment-sense) do not simply coexist. "Phenomenon" is the totality of sense in these three directions. "Phenomenology" is explication of this totality of sense.65

Phenomenology is posing three questions towards a phenomenon simultaneously. Firstly, the phenomenologist asks the question of content. This is the question of what something is. This is the question science poses and, to a certain extent, traditional philosophy. It is the question of the essence of

63 Ibid., 9.
64 Ibid., 4.
65 Ibid., 43.
something. Heidegger’s phenomenology does not reject this approach. Rather, it says that it is never the entire story. There is always more to be said about a certain phenomenon.

Secondly, one can ask the question of the relation. According to Heidegger, this is what Husserl’s phenomenology adds to the question of content. 66 After the phenomenologist has discovered the content of a phenomenon, he asks how he relates to this content. It is the question of how this content is experienced. This is, according to Heidegger, where Husserl’s phenomenology stops. It holds the content of a phenomenon and how one relates to it in pure abstraction.

Thirdly, Heidegger adds to this the question of how this relation is enacted. This is the question of how this abstract relation to the content of a phenomenon has a role in life. One can easily recognize the later development to hermeneutics in Heidegger’s thought here. One has to take the entirety of life into account to understand a single phenomenon.

This leads to a strange problem. In order to understand any phenomenon, one needs to take into account life in its entirety. The problem is that life is both a phenomenon itself as well as that through which phenomena can appear. Heidegger’s inventive solution for this problem is to make a provisional conceptualization of every phenomenon, including life. Phenomenology does not give the final understanding of any phenomenon.67

66 Ibid., 40.
Rather, it gives a provisional understanding. Heidegger calls the method through which phenomenology does this the formal indication.

The formal indication is one of the most difficult and most commented upon concepts in the early Heidegger’s work. This scholarship on the formal indication is structured by the two positions of Kisiel and Crowell. Most of the discussions in this scholarship are solely interested in the question of whether Heidegger’s formal indication is a methodological break with Husserl’s phenomenology. This is a purely methodological issue. While this is interesting for Heidegger scholarship, this thesis – while partly about Heidegger – is not concerned with these problems. The only question that needs to be answered for the present purposes is: how does the formal indication work?

The problem the formal indication should have solved for Heidegger is the following: how can one conceptualize a phenomenon without this conceptualization becoming rigid? The validity of Heidegger’s early project depends on whether the formal indication is possible.

The formal indication has two distinct functions. It is prohibitive and transformative at the same time. Firstly, the formal indication is prohibitive.

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The formal indication prohibits any final or definitive determination of a phenomenon. In particular it keeps the enactment of a phenomenon open. The prohibitive function of the formal indication explicitly rejects the idea that a phenomenon has an a priori determination. The meaning of a phenomenon needs to be discovered through the phenomenological analysis. This is important, because a premature determination of a phenomenon makes it impossible for it to be properly understood. In the case of religious phenomena, a premature determination of the enactment would, according to Heidegger, be interpreting everything in a dogmatic Lutheran perspective. This is something Heidegger explicitly rejects and which can only be avoided by keeping the enactment open. The prohibitive aspect of the formal indication is the negative moment in the determination of a phenomenon.

Secondly, the formal indication is transformative. Heidegger accepts Natorp's criticism of Husserl's phenomenology in that it remains on the level of description. To avoid this, Heidegger claims that the formal indicated philosophical concept is not a description. One cannot understand a phenomenon through a purely theoretical and cognitive approach, as was the claim made by almost all philosophers before Heidegger, including — in Heidegger's view - Husserl. Rather, one can only gain understanding of a phenomenon by re-enacting it in one's own life. The formal indication is in a

Dahlstrohm uses the terms referring-prohibitive and reversing-transformative, which overcomplicate an already difficult concept. Therefore, I have chosen to use the simpler names prohibitive and transformative which are used by Crowe, Heidegger's Phenomenology of Religion, 6–7 for the two functions of the formal indication.

72 Heidegger, The Phenomenology of Religious Life, 71.
74 Dahlstrom, Heidegger's Concept of Truth, 248.
certain way empty. It does not give a determinate meaning to a phenomenon. Rather, it keeps the enactment of a phenomenon open, so that it can be understood through the re-enactment of it in one's own life.

What kind of concept is this formally indicated concept, then? It is not a concept in the traditional sense of the word. It does not give a determination or even a definition of a phenomenon. Although the content and the relation of a phenomenon can still be determined by way of Husserlian phenomenology, the enactment is what makes a philosophical concept "vacillating, vague, manifold, and fluctuating". A philosophical concept cannot have a determinate meaning, precisely because it gains its meaning from its enactment. The content and relation of a phenomenon only serve as hint; they do not define the meaning. This is why Heidegger speaks of a formal indication.

In this part I gave an overview of Heidegger's methodology. However, the question I originally posed was not about Heidegger's method, but about the reason why Heidegger needed to devote a large part of his course on Paul to methodology. Although I have not directly answered this question, something of an answer should have become clear by now. Heidegger's phenomenological method breaks with traditional philosophy and even traditional phenomenology in such a way that one would not be able to understand it without an introduction. This is important for Heidegger, because - as it will turn out - the novelty and strength of Heidegger's reading of Paul is based on his focus on the enactment and the formal indication.

76 Heidegger, The Phenomenology of Religious Life, 3.
1.4. Subjectivity

Heidegger, then, turns to Paul to re-discover a way of living life and living one’s religion, in which life is inseparable from the act of living it. This is opposed to what Heidegger saw was common practice, namely taking a theoretical approach to life. This theoretical approach had become an implicit paradigm for how people, even in everyday life, approach life. Although Heidegger avoids using this terminology, it is clear that in Paul he is searching for a new form of subjectivity to oppose the form of subjectivity of everyday, factical life.

Now, the question is: what is this subjectivity that Heidegger discovers in primordial Christianity and how does it differ from the non-Christian subjectivity or life? Through his interpretation of the letter to the Galatians, Heidegger found two theses that guide his enquiries into Pauline subjectivity. These theses are provisional conclusions whose validity have to be evaluated in relation to the phenomenological analysis of Paul.77 These theses are:

1. Primordial Christian religiosity is in factical life experience. Postscript: It is such experience itself.

2. Factual life experience is historical. Postscript: Christian experience lives time itself (“to live” understood as *verbum transitivum*).78

These theses concern the question of how primordial Christian life relates to factical life. What does Heidegger allege about this relationship in these two theses? Primordial Christian religiosity is itself factical life experience, but as it will turn out factical life lived in a different way. It is lived differently, because

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77 Ibid., 55.
78 Ibid., 57.
as the second thesis indicates—it lives time itself. Translated into my terminology, Heidegger’s claim is that Pauline subjectivity is a transformation of subjectivity. In the following I will explain this transformation as what Heidegger calls having-become. At the end of the chapter, I will turn to a discussion of temporality and it will turn out that this Pauline subjectivity as having-become is inherently temporal.

Heidegger thematizes this mainly on the basis of his reading of the two letters to the Thessalonians and the letter to the Galatians. Regarding the letters to the Thessalonians, Heidegger asks how Paul has the Thessalonians that fell to him. Heidegger uses locutions such as ‘having’ to indicate that the question is not one of Paul’s intellectual understanding of the Thessalonians and their lives, but that their life is intimately and directly related to Paul himself. Heidegger states:

Thus we will pursue as what Paul has the congregation in
Thessalonica and how he has it. [...] The Thessalonians are those
who fell to him. In them, he necessarily co-experiences himself.

Paul’s life and the lives of the Thessalonians are the same. All of their lives have been changed. Through Paul’s experience of the lives of Thessalonians,

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79 Heidegger reads the two letters to the Thessalonians in unison. Even though Heidegger is well aware of the disputes surrounding the Pauline authorship of the second letter to the Thessalonians, Heidegger accepts Paul as its author. Furthermore, he reads the second letter as a correction of the first letter. People have misunderstood Paul, so he needed to write a second letter. Essentially, however, the two letters of the Thessalonians have the same message. See ibid.
80 Dahlstrom, Heidegger’s Concept of Truth, 23.
that is, through Paul's experience of how their lives have changed, Paul also understands how his own life has changed. So, it is Heidegger's claim that Paul can understand the shift of factical life towards Christian life through the experiences of the Thessalonians. This is an important step in Heidegger's argumentation, because it is in the letters to the Thessalonians that, according to Heidegger, Paul explains to the Thessalonians how their lives have changed. Since Paul's life has changed in the same way as the lives of the Thessalonians and the lives of the other Christians, Heidegger can understand Paul's proclamation in the letter to the Thessalonians as a systematic discussion of how Christian life as such has changed. This is also where especially the transformative aspect of the formal indication plays an important role. Paul can only understand the change in life through how it is enacted in life and not through any theoretical framework. Phrased in the terminology of this dissertation, then, what Paul exposes about the transformation in the lives of the Thessalonians in his letter is the transformation of subjectivity as such.

Even though Paul only discusses the transformation in subjectivity in the concrete situation of the Thessalonians, the formal indication allows Heidegger to discuss the subjectivity that is at stake here formally. In Heidegger's reading, Paul exposes the structure of Christian life in his letter to the Thessalonians, when he discusses their situation. For this reason, Heidegger can discuss the
subjectivity of the Thessalonians formally. It is not about the Thessalonians as such, but about the structure of subjectivity. Heidegger states:

We put forth formally the state of the relation of Paul to those who have “given themselves over to him.” Paul experiences the Thessalonians in two determinations: 1. He experiences their having-become (γενηθὲναι). 2. He experiences, that they have a knowledge of their having-become (οἶδατε [you know]). That means their having-become is also Paul’s having-become. And Paul is co-affected by their having-become. Showing this concretely from the letter is very easy. In the course of I Thess., the frequent use of (1) γενέσθαι [to come, to become] and similar words, and (2) οἶδατε [you know], μνημονεύσατε [you remember], among others, is striking. The thorough pursuit of the repetition of the same word seems external; but one must view this, in an enactment-historical understanding, as an ever-repeatedly surfacing tendency, as a motif. That is something other than the repetition of a natural event. 82

82 Ibid.
Heidegger finds two main concepts that define the new subjectivity of the Thessalonians: having-become and knowledge about this having-become. Both having-become (γεννηθήναι) and knowledge (οἴδατε) – including variations and similar words – are frequently used by Paul in the first letter to the Thessalonians. This repetition must be understood in an enactment-historical sense and not in the object-historical sense. 83 In an object-historical sense, i.e. in exegesis, the repetition of these two very common words would be seen as something external. This repetition would mean nothing more than that the verbs ‘becoming’ and ‘knowing’ are very common words. From the enactment-historical sense – that is, from the sense of this historical text as it conveys lived life – the repetition of these simple words becomes meaningful. The repetition denotes a motif in the letters and in the new subjectivity. 84

This point – which is important for Heidegger – can be elucidated by the way the Pauline letters were used in the first century. In the first century the standard of literacy was very low compared to contemporary societies. This is, however, not a deficiency, but a fundamentally different way of living. Texts were handled in a completely different way. The world of the first century was

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83 Ibid., 64.
84 Ibid., 65.
a primarily oral culture. Individual members of the congregation, then, did not read Paul’s letters, but rather they were read out loud to the entire congregation. Now then, because the letter to the Thessalonians was not read, but was heard, people could not go back to a specific passage and read it again and again. Rather, the letter was proclaimed in full as one letter. This means that a word that is repeated again and again becomes all the more dominant in the interpretation. In this sense, one can say that the repeated words could indeed be considered to be important for Paul.

What do these two terms, having-become and knowledge, denote? About these Heidegger remarks:

Knowledge about one’s own having-become poses a very special task for the explication. From out of this the meaning of a facticity is determined, one which is accompanied by a particular knowledge. We tear the facticity apart from the knowledge, but the facticity is entirely originally co-experienced. Especially in this problem, the failure of the “scientific psychology of experience” can be shown. Having-become is not, in life, [just] any incident you like. Rather, it is incessantly co-experienced, and

indeed such that their Being [Sein] now is their having-become [Gewordensein]. Their having-become is their Being now. We can grasp that more closely first through a narrower determination of having-become.86

Even though Heidegger discovers these two separate words as the key terms for the transformed account of subjectivity, he stresses that they actually cannot be understood separately. The knowledge associated with the having-become is not an epiphenomenon to the having-become, but rather it is a vital element of it. The knowledge is in such a way part of the having-become that the entire being of the Thessalonians has become a having-become.

This knowledge is a special feature of the transformation. Four remarks need to be made about this knowledge. Firstly, this knowledge is no mystical understanding. One does not gain any kind of mystical or supernatural understanding of the world, God or even oneself. The point of Heidegger’s emphasis on knowledge is that the people whose life has become a having-become know what has happened to them. They have not been taken by surprise by their transformation. Rather, they understand – at least to a certain extent – what has happened to them.87

86 Heidegger, The Phenomenology of Religious Life, 66.
87 Ibid., 65.
Secondly, the knowledge the Christians gain is knowledge of the having-become and it is gained in the transformation of their being to a having-become. The knowledge gained through the having-become is pre-theoretical and pre-reflexive. 88 It is not a matter of facts or knowledge about things. For Heidegger, this latter form of knowledge is theoretical knowledge. 89 Although both of these forms of knowledge are called knowledge in the English translation, the German original uses Erkenntnis for the theoretical form of knowledge and Wissen for the new form of pre-theoretical knowledge associated with the having-become.

Thirdly, although this knowledge is not about things, it does have a certain form of content. Kisiel describes it as a “recollected event”. 90 The knowledge is gained at the time of conversion, but extends into the present and future. It is a presupposed understanding of the new situation. It is an understanding of the new era constituted by the first coming of the messiah in the past and the eventual return of the messiah at ‘the end of time’ – called the *parousia* – in the future. 91

Fourthly, the knowledge associated with having-become is knowledge of life and the world. The theoretical is de-vivified and un-worlded. This knowledge is fully embedded in life itself. It is the knowledge of how to enact life after the *parousia*. 92 Paul’s proclamation, then, does not tell his audience how to live, but rather appeals to the knowledge they have already obtained at

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the moment their being became their having-become. So, proclamation itself has to be understood as pre-theoretical; it is a direct appeal to life itself.

Now, what is this having-become that characterizes the transformed subjectivity of the early Christians? The lives of the Christians have become something, but what have they become? About this Heidegger states:

The γενέσθαι is a δέχεσθαι τὸν λόγον, an “acceptance of the proclamation”— ἐν θλίψει πολλῇ μετὰ χαρᾶς—”in great despair.”

The δέχεσθαι brought the despair with it, which also continues, yet at the same time a “joy” (μετὰ χαρᾶς) which comes from the Holy Spirit (μνεόματος ἁγίου) is alive—a joy which is a gift, thus not motivated from out of one’s own experience. This all belongs to the character of the γενέσθαι. 2:13: λόγον θεοῦ [the word of God] is at the same time a subjective and objective genitive. The having-become is understood such that with the acceptance, the one who accepts treads upon an effective connection with God. 4:1: παρελάβειτε [learned], you have accepted the how of the Christian standard of living, etc. That which is accepted concerns the how of self-conduct in factual life.93

The having-become is further defined as an “acceptance of the proclamation ... in great despair”. This proclamation brings both joy and anguish to the people who accept it. What is accepted is the ‘how of self-conduct’, that is: a way of enacting life. This is what Paul proclaims in his letters according to Heidegger.

Proclamation is a very specific term in Heidegger’s reading of Paul. Heidegger states:

Thus for example the proclamation is itself a religious phenomenon, which is to be analyzed in all phenomenological directions of sense.94

Now, how should the phenomenon of proclamation be understood? Proclamation can be, at least provisionally, defined as the act of communicating something to an audience and appealing to the audience to believe in what is proclaimed. However, this is also what rhetorics do. The sophist also communicates something in order to convince an audience. How, then, is proclamation distinguished from sophistry?

In my view, proclamation has at least four characteristics, which distinguish it from sophistry. Firstly, proclamation can only be understood from its own content. Proclamation without content is, strictly speaking, nonsense. Sophistry also has a content, but for the sophist the content does not matter. The sophist can defend any content. For someone who proclaims, however, the

94 Ibid., 55.
specific content is of the utmost importance. Especially in the case of Paul—because we only know of him through his proclamation in his letters—the medium is the message.

Secondly, proclamation contains a promise. Prophecy, at least in the biblical sense, entails commenting on the present cultural situation by stating that the future can be better. As such, prophecy is focused on the present and not on the future as is often thought. Proclamation, on the other hand, is focused on the future. It contains the promise of a different future. From this promise an imperative to change the present originates. The temporal character of Paul’s proclamation is, as we will see, oriented towards the future. This temporal character, which is decisive for Heidegger’s understanding of Paul, is an element of the phenomenon of proclamation itself.

Thirdly, proclamation is related to truth. Without saying anything about the truth of any specific proclamation, it can be said that proclamation as a religious phenomenon always claims to be true. In proclamation truth is at stake. Proclamation has a message, which the proclaimer believes to be true and which radically affects the lives of the people who accept it. The fact that the proclamation has the pretension to be true opens the possibility for people to live their lives according to this truth. Phrased in terms of this dissertation, proclamation makes subjectivity as such possible. Truth, then, is the necessary pre-condition of subjectivity. This also gives proclamation its sense of
necessity or urgency. Truth has to be proclaimed, because truth itself is at stake.

Finally, proclamation has a certain subjective element. It is always someone who proclaims. Proclamation has to be heard and then it has to be decided whether it is convincing. However, contrary to sophistry, it is not the form of the argument or the style of the deliverer that decides whether proclamation is believed. Rather, the trustworthiness of the proclamation is based solely on the content.

Heidegger does see that proclamation is subjective and that it relates in some way to truth. The new character of the content of the Pauline proclamation can be clearly seen in Heidegger’s emphasis on the new in the letter to the Galatians. The subjective and intersubjective character of proclamation are addressed by Heidegger in his discussion on knowledge, albeit indirectly. The issue of the truth of the content of proclamation is addressed by Heidegger as part of faith. Faith is itself a way of relating to the content. However, Heidegger does not see the promise character of the proclamation. Although Heidegger has a strong interest in the temporal aspects of the content of Pauline proclamation, he does not see the temporal aspect of the proclamation itself. As we will see, for Heidegger, temporality is a central feature of Paul’s thought. He finds the temporal character, however, in the content of Paul’s proclamation and the structure of Christian subjectivity.
Heidegger fails to recognize, or at least make explicit, that the temporal aspect of Paul's thought is already embedded in the structure of proclamation as a phenomenon. Temporality is, for Paul, not a theoretical issue that he discusses, but rather it is embedded in the form of his communication. Paul not only conveys his idea of temporality through words, but he performs it in his proclamation. This point only strengthens Heidegger's analysis of Pauline temporality, even though he himself does not make this point.

This analysis of proclamation leads to two questions: how does Paul convey his proclamation and what is its content? The form of Paul's proclamation is a letter. Paul writes letters in which his proclamation is contained to Christian communities. However, for Heidegger, the fact that Paul wrote letters is only of secondary importance. According to Heidegger, Paul only writes letters, because it is the most efficient way of conveying his proclamation when he is not able to do it personally. 95 For Heidegger, the fact that Paul wrote letters is subjugated to the proclamation. The proclamation is primary. Interesting in this regard is the way the Pauline letters were most probably used in the Christian communities. In both the Jewish and Greek cultures of the first century CE, people were largely illiterate. This meant that Paul's letters could not be read by individuals, but had to be read out loud to

95 Ibid., 57.
the congregations. The concrete use of Paul’s letters was, then, proclamation. Heidegger, however, does not see or thematize this point.

Now, how does Paul convey his proclamation? What kind of language does he use? About this Heidegger remarks:

Paul gives his doctrine and directs his warning wholly in the manner of the Stoic-Cynic wandering preachers of the time. Nothing special lies in the manner of his presentation. 96

Heidegger emphasizes that, although the content of Paul’s proclamation is new, his style and delivery is not. Heidegger references Acts 17:17, which recounts how Paul spoke to the Jews in the synagogue and the Greeks in the marketplace. Heidegger stresses that Paul did not use new or mystical language, but the language that his audience was familiar with.

The content of Paul’s proclamation is the *parousia*. As Heidegger notes in his commentary on Galatians: after the death of Christ the previous era ended and a new era began. This new era is characterized by the coming *parousia*. Heidegger recounts the conceptual history of the *parousia*. The structure of Christian life experience becomes evident in the transformation of the concept of the *parousia* throughout its history. 97

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96 Ibid., 55.
97 Ibid., 71.
In classical Greek, the word *parousia* (παρουσία) means arrival or presence. In the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, which is the scripture as Paul knew it, the term *parousia* gains a very specific meaning. It is changed from a general arrival to the arrival of the messiah. From this the Christian use of the term is derived. Primordial Christianity originated historically in Judaism. Both Jesus and Paul were Jewish and so Judaism is the religious background for early Christianity. The Jewish concept of the *parousia* also gained a new meaning. For the Christian community the messiah had already come. *Parousia*, then, could no longer mean the arrival of the messiah. Rather, it came to denote the re-appearance of the messiah who had already arrived once. 98 In this Christian sense, the *parousia* gains an entirely new structure. The second coming refers to the first coming. The Christian account of the *parousia* contains the reference to an earlier event in itself. 99

Paul proclaims this *parousia* and urges people to live accordingly. The world is between the first and second coming of the messiah. Paul stresses the fact that no one knows precisely when the *parousia* will come, because it comes 'like a thief in the night'. 100 However, Heidegger notes that Paul fully

98 Ibid.
100 Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 79.
expected the \textit{parousia} to come in his own lifetime.\textsuperscript{101} Because of this, life becomes eschatological life. This is the eschatological core of Paul's proclamation.

This insight was not unique to Heidegger. Early twentieth century exegesis had already shown that eschatology was central for Paul and that Paul had the idea that he lived at the end of time. However, these exegetes did not take this seriously.\textsuperscript{102} They believed that Paul and the early Christians may have had these ideas theoretically, but they certainly did not live eschatologically. Heidegger opposes this. Heidegger argues that we have to take seriously the fact that the early Christians lived in expectation of an imminent \textit{parousia}.\textsuperscript{103} The subjectivity of the Christians has become a subjectivity that lives towards the \textit{parousia}.

Now, this proclamation is accepted in anguish. About this Heidegger states:

\begin{quote}
\textit{δούλευων} and \textit{ἀναμένων} determine every other reference as fundamental directions. The awaiting of the \textit{παρουσία} of the Lord is decisive. The Thessalonians are hope for him not in a human sense, but rather in the sense of the experience of the \textit{παρουσία}. The experience is an absolute distress (\textit{θλίπτω}).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 81.
\textsuperscript{102} For a more detailed analysis of Heidegger’s relationship to his contemporary exegesis, see: Delahaye, “Re-Enacting Paul. On the Theological Background of Heidegger’s Philosophical Reading of the Letters of Paul,” 2–17.
\textsuperscript{103} Heidegger, \textit{The Phenomenology of Religious Life}, 78.
which belongs to the life of the Christian himself. The acceptance (δεχόμενον) is an entering-oneself-into anguish. This distress is a fundamental characteristic, it is an absolute concern in the horizon of the \( \pi \alpha ρος \pi \alpha \), of the second coming at the end of time. With that we are introduced into the self-world of Paul.\(^{104}\)

Three remarks can be made about this. Firstly, accepting the proclamation is related to life. Accepting and receiving the proclamation means entering into and accepting the anguish of life. Heidegger notes a number of words in Paul—an anguish, despair, and anxiety—which all denote a similar idea. Accepting the proclamation of the \( \pi \alpha ρος \pi \alpha \) strains factual life. Factual life is characterized by a tendency-to-secure. Factual life is driven to overcome the insecurity bound up with life. Accepting the \( \pi \alpha ρος \pi \alpha \) means in the first place to accept that life is insecure and to cope with this. Take for example the love of another person. Love is always a pure gift. Another person gives it to you, but can also take it back at any moment. There is no way to force another person to love you. However, the tendency-to-secure tries this even though it is impossible. Accepting the \( \pi \alpha ρος \pi \alpha \) is, then, accepting the impossibility of securing everything. The anguish of life should be taken as anguish.\(^{105}\)

Secondly, accepting the proclamation of the \( \pi \alpha ρος \pi \alpha \) means appropriating it as an event. Both the proclamation as well as the \( \pi \alpha ρος \pi \alpha \)

\(^{104}\) Ibid., 67.
should be understood in this sense. Paul arrives in the lives of the people in Thessalonica and he proclaims his message to them. This is not a mere occurrence, but a proper event in the lives of the Thessalonians. This means that the proclamation needs to be understood as something that is important in life. Simply put, accepting the proclamation means appropriating the word of God into your life.

Thirdly, accepting the proclamation and entering into the anguish of life also entails recognizing the impossibility of having complete control over one’s life. The *parousia* is itself a source of anguish. One cannot know — in a determinate, scientific way — when the *parousia* will come, but it affects life. It is a future event without a definite ‘when’. This only increases the anguish that is already present in life. Because the *parousia* only exists as an event, that is, as something with an existential importance, the insecurity about the ‘when’ of the *parousia* becomes an insecurity about something which affects oneself in a radical way. It is, to say it in a classical theological way, the impossibility of having or being one’s own salvation. Phrased in a more philosophical way: accepting the *parousia* as an event means letting go of the idea that one can determine one’s own future. As such it is impossible to have-oneself-fully, because at the very least one cannot have one’s own future. This is a defining feature of the having-become, which is something which happens to

someone, but which is never possessed. Having-become means accepting that one can never have oneself fully.

After defining the having-become as an accepting of the proclamation of the *parousia*, Heidegger goes on. He states:

That which is accepted is the how of self-conduct. [...] It is about an absolute turning-around, more precisely about a turning-toward God and a turning-away from idol-images. The absolute turning-toward within the sense of enactment of factical life is explicited in two directions: δούλευσιν [serving] and ἀναμένει [waiting], a transformation before God and an obstinate waiting.¹¹⁰

We have seen how accepting the proclamation of the *parousia* means living in the insecurity of life. The transformed subjectivity does not understand itself, or what has happened, or the proclamation fully. Heidegger further defines this accepting in terms of a turning-around of life towards God and away from idol-images. The concept of God is an interesting one in Heidegger's text. Even though Paul obviously mentions God numerous times in his letters, Heidegger only discusses God once. Heidegger mentions:

For the explication, the task arises to determine the sense of the objecthood of God. It is a decrease of authentic understanding if God is grasped primarily as an object of speculation. That can be realized only if one carries out the explication of the conceptual connections. This, however, has never been attempted, because Greek philosophy penetrated into Christianity.¹¹¹

The strange thing about this remark is that it does not fit the context of what Heidegger is discussing. Indeed, Heidegger is talking about the turning-towards-God, but in the text surrounding this remark he emphasizes the

¹¹¹ Ibid., 67.
turning-around. God seems to be an afterthought. Even the content of this remark seems to be an aside. Heidegger states that God has never been understood properly, because of the influence of Greek metaphysics. Never does he, however, take up this project in his reading of Paul or mention it any further. Heidegger is not interested in rethinking the concept of God in this text.

Instead, the aspect of the turning-towards-God Heidegger emphasizes is the turn. The new, Christian subjectivity is about having one’s life turned around. This life, however, is not turned-around by itself, but by something which exists outside of it. This is the grace-character of the new subjectivity.112 Something, which is not the subject itself, turns it around in an absolute way. For Heidegger the important point is that it implies an absolute break with the old way of life, the way of idol-images.113 What is definitively turned around is the enactment of life.

Heidegger further defines this turning-around as a serving and waiting. Serving and waiting are determined in relation to the impending parousia. Even though Heidegger rejects the term eschatology as being too dogmatically charged, there is a definite eschatological element in this new subjectivity.114 Life is changed into a serving and waiting life in front of the parousia. However, it is not about a passive waiting as if one were waiting for the bus.115

112 Crowe, Heidegger’s Phenomenology of Religion, 66.
114 Heidegger, The Phenomenology of Religious Life, 82.
115 One of the main shifts within this new subjectivity will turn out to be a radically different understanding of temporality. However, this temporality is not a matter of waiting for the parousia, but rather it is bound up with this serving/waiting enactment of life. I will discuss this point in much greater detail later in this chapter.
This is why Heidegger emphasizes the serving and waiting in unison. Rather, it is about a single serving/waiting attitude in front of God and the *parousia*. Primordial Christian eschatology, then, is not about waiting for an event to come, but about enacting one’s life in the uncertainty of the *parousia*.\(^\text{116}\) Heidegger, then, actually understands eschatology as anthropology, because the shift in life established by the *parousia* only happens in life as it is lived.\(^\text{117}\) As we will see, this stands in a strong contrast to Badiou who emphasizes the ontological shift in reality that occurred in the event.

Up until now I have established that for Heidegger having-become entails accepting the impending *parousia* and having your life turned around by it. This is, however, only the formal structure of the shift in life in relation to the *parousia*. The central question that still remains is: what does this shift entail concretely? In other words, what does this life, this new subjectivity look like? To answer this question, I will turn to Heidegger’s reading of the second letter to the Thessalonians.

In the scholarship it is heavily contested whether Paul was the author of the second letter to the Thessalonians. In Heidegger’s view, this is an important problem for the philosophical analysis. Misunderstanding the second letter to the Thessalonians means misunderstanding the enactment-historical nature of Paul’s letters. This is why Heidegger takes such a strong stance on this matter.

One of the traditional arguments to reject the Pauline authorship of the second letter to the Thessalonians is that the second letter reuses phrases and texts form the first letter to the Thessalonians to a large extent. Heidegger was well aware of this, and he mentions the theologian Schmidt in this regard. For Heidegger, however, this is one of the main reasons to claim that Paul did


\(^{117}\) Brejdak, “Philosophia Crucis: The Influence of Paul on Heidegger’s Phenomenology,” 213.
indeed author the second letter. According to Heidegger everyone who claims that Paul did not write this letter does not understand what was going on.118

Why is Heidegger so vehement in stating that Paul did indeed author both letters? It is because of, Heidegger claims, the situation in which the letters were written. The first letter had a definite message: ‘the parousia will happen, so your lives have changed. Now act like it!’ From the second letter it seems that some people have misunderstood Paul. They act in an improper way. According to Heidegger, the second letter to the Thessalonians is Paul’s attempt to explain to the Thessalonians how they should act to be saved.119 The repetition in phrases denotes Paul’s attempt to stress his message and to repeat it to people who clearly had not understood it the first time.

In the second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul describes two groups of Christians, the sōzomenoi and the apollumenoi, respectively the ones who are being saved and the ones who are perishing.120 Heidegger takes great care to mention that it is not a matter of the saved against the rejected, but rather the ones who are in the process of being saved against the ones who are in the process of being rejected. Belonging to one of these two groups depends on the reaction to the proclamation.121

Heidegger explains it in the following way. In the first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul wrote about the parousia and told the Thessalonians that it will happen soon. The Thessalonians, then, reacted to this news in one of two ways. Firstly, there was a group that stopped working completely. They sold their belongings and waited for the end to come. These are the ones who are

118 Heidegger, The Phenomenology of Religious Life, 75.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid., 80.
121 Ibid., 79.
being rejected. They are being rejected because they try to secure their lives against the *parousia*. They do not know exactly when it will happen, but because they want to live their life in ‘peace and security’, they prepare for the *parousia* by stopping their lives. This is exactly factual life’s tendency to secure. These people have misunderstood Paul’s proclamation and based on their actions, it was clear to Paul that the lives of these people had not changed.

The ones who are being saved, however, went on with their lives. They lived their lives accepting the anguish and as such their lives were transformed. Their lives were transformed in that they enacted time and the world in a different way. I will thematize how temporality and the world have changed for this new, Christian subjectivity later in the chapter. This second group lives their lives in an obstinate waiting, while – as Critchley notes – the ones who are being rejected live in “bovine tranquility”.

1.5. Temporality

Up to this point I have presented the transformation in subjectivity that Heidegger finds in Paul, without discussing the concept of temporality. The two, however, are inseparable for Heidegger. As we have seen, one of Heidegger’s two main theses in his lectures on Paul is precisely that primordial Christianity lives temporality as such. Why, then, have I chosen to separate the discussion of temporality from the discussion of subjectivity?

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123 Ibid., 74.
I have two reasons for this decision. Firstly, it strengthens my analysis and comparison of the works of Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben to systematize them in the same way. Moreover, I do not believe I do any injustice to, in this case, Heidegger’s text by splitting subjectivity from temporality. The split, after all, is purely a didactic systematization. It is by no means my claim that subjectivity and temporality are actually separated. The second reason for this split is that even though the shift in subjectivity entails a shift in temporality, they are different concepts. By splitting my explanation, I believe I can do justice to both phenomena on a conceptual level. When they are discussed in unison, some of the specific characteristics of each of these phenomena can be lost. Especially the concept of the parousia – which plays an important, but different role in both subjectivity and temporality – can easily be misunderstood, when the distinction between subjectivity and temporality is not drawn out systematically.

Now, to return to the discussion of temporality, I have stated that, for Heidegger, Christian life lives temporality as such. Why is this the case? What is the argument for this? Heidegger actually does not argue for this point, but takes it as one of his fundamental hypotheses, which he sets out to show in his lectures on Paul. 126 Obviously, however, Heidegger did not choose this hypothesis at random. There is a basis for it. According to Figal, the reason has to be found in the phenomenon of primordial Christianity itself. Primordial Christianity exists by having faith in the death and resurrection of Christ in the past, being addressed by the revelation in the present and expecting the parousia in the future. 127 The phenomenon itself has a temporal character.

126 Ibid.
Heidegger’s first discovery in engaging with temporality in primordial Christianity is that there is a relationship between enactment and temporality. As we have seen enactment is a central aspect of every phenomenon for Heidegger. Every phenomenon can be enacted in different ways. This is the same for the phenomenon of temporality. What does it mean to say that one enacts temporality? It means that time is lived in a specific way. Now, according to Heidegger, something special happens in Paul, which had not happened before. In Paul’s letters, Heidegger discovers a primordial relationship between temporality and enactment. He finds a new way to enact temporality, which Heidegger calls kairolological. This temporality is not a solidified concept external to life. Rather it is a phenomenon that can only be properly understood through how it is lived. In Paul, Heidegger discovers that time is not an objective quality, but that it is something which needs to be enacted.\footnote{Sheehan, “Heidegger’s ‘Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion,’ 1920-1921,” 51.}

What is this kairolological temporality Heidegger finds in Paul? The question of temporality is present on the background of Heidegger’s entire engagement with Paul. Heidegger addresses this question most explicitly, however, in his discussion of 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10. Heidegger gives a very dense, but rich analysis of 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10. The text reads as follows:

\begin{quote}
1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you.\footnote{Sheehan, “Heidegger’s ‘Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion,’ 1920-1921,” 51.} For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.\footnote{Sheehan, “Heidegger’s ‘Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion,’ 1920-1921,” 51.} When they say, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape!\footnote{Sheehan, “Heidegger’s ‘Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion,’ 1920-1921,” 51.} But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of
\end{quote}
So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. (NRSV)

The question Paul discusses in this text is the question of when the parousia will happen. One can imagine this being a question that Paul had to answer quite a lot. He proclaims the imminent parousia, so obviously people want to know when this will happen. Paul’s answer to this question, however, is a very intriguing one.

Heidegger reads 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10 as structured by an opposition introduced in the first verse, namely the opposition of ‘times’ (chronos) and ‘seasons’ (kairos). The NRSV translates chronos and kairos as times and seasons; however, Heidegger has a decidedly different translation. Heidegger translates them as Zeit and Augenblick, respectively, which are in turn translated by the English translators of The Phenomenology of Religious Life as ‘time’ and ‘moment’. Heidegger reads Paul’s statement about chronos and kairos as a technical one. According to Heidegger, kairos and chronos denote a very specific, Christian account of temporality. Kairos is a term denoting the eschatological time that began with the arrival of Christ. This technical meaning can be found in Romans 13:11. According to Heidegger, Paul also refers to the technical meaning in 1 Thessalonians 5:1.

129 The terms Zeit and Augenblick gain a very specific, systematic meaning in Being and Time. In this earlier text, however, there is no such meaning yet. See Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1962), 376.
According to Heidegger, *chronos* and *kairos* denote two different senses of temporality. About this Heidegger states:

"Time and moment" (5:1: "περί τῶν χρόνων καὶ καιρῶν" always used in one) offers a special problem for the explication. The "When" is already not originally grasped, insofar as it is grasped in the sense of an attitudinal "objective" time. The time of "factual life" in its falling, unemphasized, non-Christian sense is also not meant. Paul does not say "When," because this expression is inadequate to what is to be expressed, because it does not suffice.\(^{130}\)

Heidegger defines *chronos* as the non-Christian, falling, unemphasized sense of time. It is time as it is experienced in everyday, factual life. This time is 'objective'. It is the time of the clock and the time that one can measure and calculate with. Heidegger puts objective between scare quotes, because this chronological account of time is far from objective.\(^{131}\) Like kairological time, chronological time is also a specific enactment of time. This enactment of temporality, however, is not the Christian enactment of it. This kairological, Christian enactment is characterized by a completely different answer to the question of when the *parousia* will happen.

One would expect either one of two answers to the question of when the *parousia* will happen: either a specific moment or the answer that no one can know when it will happen. Paul gives the second answer. He claims that the 'when' of the *parousia* cannot be known through knowledge. However, this only applies to the theoretical knowledge of factual life. As we have seen,

\(^{130}\) Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 72.

however, a new form of knowledge accompanies Christian subjectivity. Through this, the ones who have understood the proclamation know when the *parousia* will happen, albeit not in a cognitive or theoretical way. One knows when the *parousia* will happen through the kairological enactment of temporality. Paul’s answer to the question of when the *parousia* will happen leads Heidegger to discover two forms of enacting temporality that correspond to two forms of life.

In my discussion of Heidegger’s reading of the second letter to the Thessalonians, I have already shown that Paul distinguishes two forms of life from each other. The two forms, which Paul will call the ones who are being rejected and the ones who are being saved, correspond to two ways of living temporality.\(^\text{132}\) Again it becomes clear why subjectivity and temporality are so intimately related for Heidegger: temporality is something you enact. The two forms of life correspond to enacting temporality as either *chronos* or *kairos*.

Heidegger first discusses the chronological, rejected enactment of temporality. He finds this expressed in 1 Thessalonians 5:3-4. He states:

> Those who find rest and security in this world are those who cling to this world because it provides peace and security. “Peace and security” characterizes the mode of this relation to those who speak this way. […] Because they live in this expectation, the ruin hits them in such a way that they cannot flee from it. They cannot save themselves, because they do not have themselves, because they have forgotten their own self, because they do not have themselves in the clarity of authentic knowledge.\(^\text{133}\)

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The chronological enactment of time is characterized by “peace and security”. This enactment can only be understood in relation to the *parousia*. Paul announced the impending *parousia* and the only thing on the minds of these people is “peace and security”. They want Paul to give them an exact moment when the *parousia* will happen, so they can prepare for it. They want to secure their lives against the *parousia*, so that they can live on in peace. These people do not want to be surprised by the *parousia*. This is, however, impossible, because – as Paul emphasizes – the *parousia* always comes suddenly.\(^{134}\) It always comes like a thief in the night.

The problem with enacting temporality in this chronological manner is that it conceals the fact that it is an enactment of temporality. Chronological enactment of temporality presents time as an objective, theoretical condition of phenomena. Heidegger states:

> So long as the sense of “temporal” is undetermined, one could understand it as [something] not prejudicing; one could mean: insofar as each objecthood constitutes itself in consciousness, it is temporal, and with that one has won the fundamental schema of the temporal. But this “general-formal” determination of time is no foundation; rather it is a falsification of the problem. For with that a *framework* for the time-phenomenon has been predelineated from out of the *theoretical*. Rather, the problem of time must be grasped in the way we originally experience temporality in factual experience—entirely irrespective of all pure consciousness and all pure time.\(^{135}\)

In the chronological enactment of time, time is understood from out of the theoretical. Temporality – and Heidegger also uses the term ‘historical’ in this


\(^{135}\) Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 44.
context should actually be understood from out of life itself. When one does that, it becomes clear that temporality is “immediate vivacity”.

There is one more problem Heidegger finds in the chronological enactment of temporality through Paul. The people who want peace and security not only misunderstand Paul’s proclamation of the parousia and the eschatological dimension of primordial Christianity, but they also misunderstand their having-become. These people have, at some point, superficially accepted Paul’s proclamation and became Christians. They could not, however, accept the radical insecurity of their transformed subjectivity. Even without any mythical or apocalyptical element, which are completely irrelevant for Heidegger’s philosophical reading of Paul, it is easy to understand how a person who wants to secure everything against life and its inherent unpredictability will be overcome by ruin. Wanting to overcome and control everything is a feat no person can achieve.

Opposed to the chronological enactment of temporality, Heidegger puts the kairological enactment. Both forms of enactment depend on one’s attitude

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136 In the methodological introduction Heidegger ends with a discussion of the meaning of ‘the historical’, because it is the core phenomenon in the course “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion”. When Heidegger dropped the methodological discussion, he also drops the concept of ‘the historical’ entirely, instead talking about temporality. Aside from the terminological difference, however, I take these terms to be equivalent. Through both concepts Heidegger discovers enactment as such. Moreover, for both concepts he moves away from an ‘objective’ conceptualisation into one based in life itself. It is my belief that after Heidegger had to break off his methodological introduction he came back to the point he wanted to make about the historical through his reading of Paul.


138 For Heidegger the eschatological problem in the center of Christianity. The eschatological nature of Christianity has, however, been covered up and misunderstood in the course of the history of the Church. Although Heidegger does not become more explicit than remarking this, his reading of Paul ‘primordial Christianity’ can be read as a criticism of all—especially dogmatic— theology. See ibid., 73.
towards the *parousia*. It is not coincidental that Heidegger finds an expression of Christian temporality in Paul’s answer to the question of when the *parousia* will happen. The ones who are in the process of being rejected have misunderstood Paul in that they understand the *parousia* from the perspective of their, chronological, temporality, that is, they understand the *parousia* as a future occurrence that has a time and a place. Paul’s point is precisely that one cannot understand the *parousia* like this.

As was already noted, the entire question of temporality depends, for Paul, on how one enacts the coming of the *parousia*. The fact that the *parousia* will come is a given for Paul. This fact is what changes the subjectivity of the ones who accepted the proclamation into Christian subjectivity. In this way the *parousia* is a future event. It is not, however, an event in a chronological order of events. Rather, it should be understood and enacted in a completely different way.

About this, Heidegger states:

One could think, first of all: the basic comportment to the *parousia* is a waiting, and Christian hope (ἐλπίς) is a special case thereof. But that is entirely false! We never get to the relational sense of the *parousia* by merely analyzing the consciousness of a future event. The structure of Christian hope, which in truth is the relational sense of *Parousia*, is radically different from all expectation.139

Understanding the temporality of the *parousia* and, as such, the kairological enactment of temporality can only be done through a proper understanding of Christian hope. This hope, Heidegger claims, can only be understood from out of the enactment of Paul’s own life and consequently, from out of the enactment of Christian subjectivity.

139 Ibid., 71–72.
The entire question of how to understand the ‘when’ of the parousia becomes a question of enactment; a question of how one lives one’s life with regards to the impending parousia. Heidegger states:

How the parousia stands in my life, that refers back to the enactment of life itself. The meaning of the “When,” of the time in which the Christian lives, has an entirely special character. Earlier we formally characterized: “Christian religiosity lives temporality.” It is a time without its own order and demarcations. One cannot encounter this temporality in some sort of objective concept of time. The when is in no way objectively graspable.\textsuperscript{140}

The ‘how’ of Christian life, that is: how one enacts Christian subjectivity, entails living temporality itself. This temporality is one ‘without its own order and demarcations’. The non-objective nature of this temporality has already been established, but what can be said positively about this temporality? As is Heidegger’s style, he initially only makes provisional and negative remarks about temporality. He can establish what it is not, but not what it is.

One can, however, gain a provisional and preliminary understanding of the temporality by a comparison with temporality in Being and Time. I will not ‘foreshorten’ the time between these lectures on Paul and Being and Time by claiming that the later concept of temporality is a transformation of the earlier one. My only claim is that there is a strong structural parallel between the temporality in Being and Time and in “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion”. Obviously, the discussion of temporality in Being and Time is much more developed, being much longer than Heidegger’s entire treatise on Paul. As such, it would be improper to take the details of Heidegger’s discussion of temporality in Being and Time to fill in the blanks in “Introduction to the

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 73.
Phenomenology of Religion”. However, in my contention, there is one point at which the comparison between the two works is enlightening for the understanding of Heidegger’s reading of Paul without prejudicing it towards an interpretation in the vein of *Being and Time*, namely in the comparison between death and the *parousia*.

In *Being and Time*, death plays a central role in temporality. Living temporality is determined by the fact that death is always impending. Death is the possibility that is always left outstanding. Whatever happens, you can be sure of the fact that you are going to die. Because death is always a possibility, it guarantees possibility as such. Life can never be completely secure, because death is always left outstanding. 141

It is immediately clear how death and the *parousia* are similar. Death and the *parousia* both function as the final possibility which are necessarily possible. Regardless of the details of the similarities, what is important are two vital differences which are very informative about the nature of the kairolological enactment of the temporality in relation to the *parousia*.

Firstly, death is the final possibility of Dasein. We may compare death to *parousia* and similarly Dasein to Heidegger’s account of Christian subjectivity in Paul. In *Being and Time*, death is an existential structure. However, this does not change the fact that it is my death that limits Dasein. The ultimate possibility in my future is my death. Death is an unavoidable part of Dasein’s life. The *parousia*, on the other hand, is independent of life. If the *parousia* happens, it happens for the entire world. 142 It is an event on the scale of macro-history and not just my own micro-history. This means that not just every individual life is characterized by possibility, but life as such is.

Secondly, Heidegger presents death as a possibility in *Being and Time*, but is this truly the case? Of course, no one can know when one will die, but the fact that one will die is undeniable. As such, the fact of death is a security. Only one aspect of death, namely when it will happen, is a matter of possibility and only in the sense that it is possible at any moment. This is not exactly the case for the *parousia*. Although Paul believed the *parousia* would come, it is precisely that: a belief. One can never be sure. It is truly only a possibility. The implication of this is that the insecurity fully permeates life. With death one can at least be sure that death will come, but for the *parousia* even that is still insecure.

The kairological enactment of temporality exposes the dual nature of the *parousia*. It is both a cosmological and an anthropological event, although Heidegger does not discuss the former aspect of the parousia at all. It changes subjectivity, but also the world itself. The shift in the world, however, is only noticeable through the subjective relation to the world, which I will discuss in the following part. The anthropological aspect of the kairological enactment of temporality means that Pauline subjectivity should not try to control temporality, but rather accept it. It is fully living in an obstinate waiting in the insecurity of life. It essentially means to live a contingent life.

1.6. World

Before discussing how the world changes for the Christian subject, it is important to clarify what the concept of world entails in pre-Christian existence. Although Heidegger’s concept of the world that he develops in *Being and Time* is fairly well known, the concept of world in “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion” is different.
What is the pre-Christian, factical conception of the world? About this concept, Heidegger writes:

“World” is that in which one can live (one cannot live in an object). The world can be formally articulated as surrounding world (milieu), as that which we encounter, and to which belong not only material things but also ideal objectivities, the sciences, art, etc. Within this surrounding world is also the communal world, that is, other human beings in a very specific, factical characterization: as a student, a lecturer, as a relative, superior, etc., and not as specimen of the natural-scientific species homo sapiens, and the like. Finally, the “I”-self, the self-world, is also found within factical life experience.143

Heidegger makes a distinction between three ‘worlds’. Firstly, there is the surrounding or environing world (Umwelt). This is the environment in which we live. The city, the forest, the ocean, but also my house and the local market all make up my surrounding world. It consists of all these regions in which life occurs. Secondly, the with-world (Mit-welt). The with-world is all the other people in a life, such as parents, teachers, friends and also strangers. Finally, Heidegger distinguishes the self-world (Selbst-welt). The self-world is not the same as the self.144 The self-world is the self insofar as it is encountered in life. Heidegger describes it as the personal rhythm of life. The self-world is the self as it expresses itself in the world explicitly. In the self-world, the self is encountered as world, as the place wherein life is lived and where things happen.

143 Heidegger, The Phenomenology of Religious Life, 8.
All three worlds are encountered in such a way that the self is central. The environing-world consists in the first place of the environment in which I live. My house, the church I go to, the place where I go for an evening walk and all the places I do not know and where I have never been. The self is the point of orientation in the environing world.\(^{145}\)

The same goes for the with-world. The people in the with-world give themselves to me through the perspective of myself. The with-world is filled with my parents, my teachers, my friends. All people are experienced through the self. Some people are strangers to me and they can be complete strangers whom I do not know or strangers like ‘the girl with the hat who is standing near me’ or ‘that man sitting over there’. The with-world is not filled with other people in general, but with people in their relation to the self. Even strangers are ‘strangers to me’.\(^{146}\)

The self-world is also centered around the self, but not because the self and the self-world are identical. The self-world expresses itself in certain occurrences. The way I encounter myself does not remain the same. Yesterday’s self is different from last Sunday’s or my last vacation’s. In each of these instances the self-world was different. The self-world had a certain circumstantiality. One always encounters his self-world in a particular situation. This is the circumstantiality of the self-world. All these previous self-worlds relate to the current one in a particular way. My last vacation is never a mere experience, but it is an encounter with a certain circumstantiality of my


\(^{146}\) Ibid.
self-world. I encounter myself as I was during the situation of my last vacation. The self-world introduces a form of unity in the past and present.147

In factical life, however, there is a priority of the self-world. The with-world and the surrounding world are experienced primarily through the self-world. Even though all three ‘worlds’ are centered on the self, the dominance of the self-world entails that for factical life the surrounding world and the with-world are only experienced as significant through the self-world. Heidegger explains this point clearly in a passage in Basic Problems of Phenomenology. Winter Semester 1919/1920. He states:

In the circle of intelligible discoveries belongs not just the environing-world [Umwelt, in The Phenomenology of Religious Life translated as surrounding world], but also the with-world [Mitwelt] – fellow human beings, who live “with” me, “with whom I” myself live; “with-world” as a sector that is nearest to us, that is discoverable and experienceable, a form of manifestation of human society. Thus, science of the forms and formations of the with-world, of its historical developments: history of the church, of sects, of countries, of the city, village history, history of universities, guild history, clan and family history.

But again, all of these are already solidified, stabilized tendencies and formations of living with our fellow human beings, which expose contexts that are still more “original”, more varied, and simpler: in the current darkness I lead someone home; I eat lunch with him at midday; I loan him a rare book: I write letters, make phone calls: I wear these clothes for the other person, for an evening party, for “going to the theater.”

With-world, environing-world live in a remarkable context of permeation with my self-world, whose circumstantiality in this context opens up as virtually a living and flowing context, so that people still thought that the with-world and that society in general are nothing real, but rather exist only in the sum and

147 And as will become clear in Heidegger’s reading of Paul, also the future.
composition of an individual. So also the self-world of a human being as such can thus be shaped and become the object of science. 148

In all three worlds or rather manifestations of the world, the self is central. This means that I always experience the world as my world, that is, as the environment in which I live, the people close to me, the way I encounter myself. In factical life, however, how I experience my environment and the people around me comes to depend on how I experience myself. The difference is that even though the self is central in the surrounding world and the with-world, it is a matter of relation. I experience these three worlds through the self, but the self is not the absolute center of these worlds. Factical life’s emphasis on the self-world, however, leads to the misconception that the self is actually central and that they depend on the self. Because the self-world is so closely related to the self, however, factical life privileges it. Factical life’s primacy of the self-world stems, according to Heidegger, from an exclusive focus on the content sense of factical experience. About this, Heidegger states:

One can only characterize the manner, the how, of the experiencing of those worlds; that is, one can ask about the relational sense of factical life experience. It is questionable whether the how—the relation—determines that which is experienced—the content—and how the content is characterized. We will isolate, furthermore, the taking-cognizance-of or the cognitive experiencing, since philosophy is supposed to be cognitive behavior. 149

Factual life exclusively focuses on the content of the surrounding world and with-world. Because factical life is indifferent to the way these worlds are experienced, Heidegger claims, factical life cannot even imagine that there are

148 Heidegger, Basic Problems of Phenomenology, Winter Semester 1919/1920., 43–44.
things that are not accessible to it. It is factual life’s claim that it can experience everything there is and that what factual life experiences is everything there is to experience.

Heidegger’s claim is that this is how factual life works, so this should be an analysis – at least to a certain extent – of everyday life. Is this the case? Unfortunately, every answer to this question is gratuitous and lacks philosophical rigor. Substantiating this claim would require a vast and comprehensive analysis of life itself. One thing can, however, be said in defense of Heidegger’s claim. There is a certain self-centeredness in everyday experience. At the very least it is undeniable that all my experiences are mine and that they, as such, have a privileged status for me. It is easy to see how an overemphasis on this privileged character could lead to what Heidegger describes in his analysis of factual life.

There is one further critical note one can make towards Heidegger’s analysis, namely that Heidegger misses something important in his analysis. In factual life’s focus on the content, it not only forgets the relation, but also the self-world itself. Even though factual life has a primacy of the self-world, it no longer sees that the self-world exists as something separate from itself. It disregards everything that it does not experience as non-existent. This claim, to fully understand the world, also applies to the self-world, thereby reducing the self-world to mere consciousness, that is: that part of myself to which I have immediate and direct access. As we will see, the self-world properly speaking is something that is rediscovered in Christian subjectivity.

Now, how does Christian subjectivity relate to these three manifestations of the world? How does Christian, factual life – because

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150 Ibid.
Christian subjectivity also has its own facticity – live the world? First, the surrounding world and the with-world. About these, Heidegger states:

The connection of the Christian with the surrounding world is discussed in I Cor. 1:26–27; 7:20. The significances of life remain, but a new comportment arises. We want to follow further the problem of proclamation in such a way that we leave matters of content entirely aside; now it must be shown that Christian religiosity lives temporality. What meaning communal-worldly and surrounding-worldly relations have for the Christian must be understood; and if they do, in what way. Christian factual life experience is historically determined by its emergence with the proclamation that hits the people in a moment, and then is unceasingly also alive in the enactment of life. Further, this life experience determines, for its part, the relations which are found in it.\(^{151}\)

The content of the world does not change for Christian subjectivity, that is, the factual conditions of one’s life do not change all of a sudden after accepting the proclamation that the \textit{parousia} will come. One still lives in the same place, is the same age, has the same family and has the same job. What is changed, however, is the way one relates to the surrounding world and the with-world (which is translated as communal world in this translation for no apparent reason). From the moment one accepts the \textit{parousia}, one must enact one’s relations to the surrounding world and the with-world in a different manner.

What does this change in enactment entail with regard to the relations to these worlds? Heidegger continues:

In this having-become, how should the Christian comport himself to the surrounding world and communal world (I Cor. 7:20; 1:26 ff. οὐφοροί, ὀνόματι, σωφροσύνης [wise, powerful, of noble birth])?—Τα ὀνόματα: the reality of worldly life is targeted. The reality of life consists in the appropriative tendency of such

\(^{151}\) Ibid., 83.
significances. But these do not at all become dominating tendencies in the realm of the facticity of Christian life. Rather ἐν τῇ κλήσει μενέτω [remain in the condition in which you were called]! At issue is only to find a new fundamental comportment to it. That must be shown now in the manner of its enactment-structure. The indeed existing [daseienden] significances of real life are lived ὄς μή, as if not.¹⁵²

Even though the content of the world and the things therein have, strictly speaking, not changed, there has been a change. The things which are deemed important, wise, powerful and noble, ta onta (τα ὅντα), by factical life should be lived through the ἥσος μὲ (ὡς μῆ). Paul refers to these things as ta mé onta (τα μή ὅντα). As we will see in the following chapter, this transition of ta onta to ta mé onta is a central feature of Badiou's reading of Paul. The things that are important according to factical life, have become nothing after the proclamation of the parousia. Paul did not just proclaim that the parousia will come, but also that the world is changing. The things that factical life deems important are brought to nothing by Paul's proclamation. This change, however, happens only on the level of enactment. Heidegger continues:

The relational sense is not changed, and still less the content. Thus: the Christian does not step out of this world. If one is called as slave, he should not at all fall into the tendency [to suppose] that something could be won for his Being in the increase of his freedom. The slave should remain a slave. It is a matter of indifference in which surrounding-worldly significance he stands. The slave as Christian is free from all bonds, but the free one as Christian becomes a slave before God. (The γενέσθαι is a δουλεύειν before God.) These directions of sense which refer to the surrounding world, to one's vocation, and to that which one is (self-world) determine in no way the facticity of the Christian. Nonetheless they are there, they will be maintained and first authentically assigned [zugeeignet]

¹⁵² Ibid., 84.
there. The significances of the surrounding world become, through having-been, temporal possessions.\textsuperscript{153}

The conditions in which one finds oneself – being a slave for example – do not change. One is still a slave. Similarly, the surrounding world and the with-world (communal world) remain the same. All these relations, to my environment, to the people around me and to myself, are unchanged, but should be enacted in a different way. They should be enacted, Heidegger states, temporally. Here it will become clear why temporality should be understood through the Christian’s relation to the world. These three worlds become “temporal possessions”. How should this be understood? Even though the conditions are what they are factically, they could be different, have been different and – as the proclamation of the \textit{parousia} makes clear – will be different. Even though factual life treats the world it encounters as everything there is and therefore as necessary, the proclamation of the \textit{parousia} shows the sheer contingency of all worldly matters. These matters are truly nothing, \textit{ta mē onta}.

This is, however, not the entire story for Heidegger. He goes on by stating that this is merely a negative characterization of the Christian relation to the world. It only says how the world should not be enacted. The question now, Heidegger states, is how this should be understood positively. For this Heidegger moves to 1 Corinthians 7:29-32, the \textit{hōs mē} passage, in which both the Christian temporality and the Christian enactment are shown according to Heidegger. He states:

There remains only yet a little time, the Christian living incessantly in the only-yet (\textit{Nur-Noch}), which intensifies his distress. [...] The Christians should be such

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 85.
that those who have a wife, should have her in such a way, that they do not have her, etc. To σχήμα τοῦ κόσμου [the present form of this world]: the form of the world passes away; σχήμα is not meant so very objectively, rather as ordered toward a self-comportment. Rom. 12:2 shows how σχήμα [form] should be understood: καὶ μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ [and do not be conformed to this world]. Here one can gather the enactment-character of σχήμα.154

1 Corinthians 7:29-32 begins with Paul’s claim that the ‘time has grown short’ and that Paul’s ‘brothers and sisters’, that is: the people who have become Christian, should act in a certain way. Heidegger emphasizes that this short time that is left makes it so that the lives of Christians are an only-yet, there is a finite amount of time left, so they should make sure that they enact their relations to the world in a proper way. The Christians should enact their lives hōs mē, as if not. They should do this, because the present form of the world is passing away.

Heidegger stresses that one should not take this literally or objectively. The point is not that the world will end, but rather the way the world is now and what factical life deems important will end. So, the Christians should take care that they not take on the shape of the world. They should enact their lives hōs mē, which entails an inversion of what factical life deems important.

Even though the hōs mē turns out to be the concept on which Heidegger’s reading of Paul hinges, he makes remarkably few explicit remarks about it. Heidegger interprets Paul’s hōs mē as a way of enactment. So, people who have wives should have wives in such a way that they do not have wives. Heidegger further clarifies this as follows:

154 Ibid., 85–86.
One is tempted to translate the ὁς ἢ by "as if," but that will not work. "As if" expresses an objective connection, and suggests the view that the Christian should eliminate these relations to the surrounding world. This ὁς means, positively, a new sense that is added. The ἢ concerns the complex of enactment of the Christian life. All of these relations experience a retardation in the respective enactment, so that they arise out of the origin of primordial Christian life experience. Christian life is not straightforward, but is rather broken up: all surrounding-world relations must pass through the complex of enactment of having-become, so that this complex is then co-present, but the relations themselves, and that to which they refer, are in no way touched.155

Heidegger rejects the meaning of 'as if' for the hos of ὁς ἢ. It is not about eliminating the relations to the world and only pretending that they still exist. The ὁς ἢ has two components. Firstly, the me, not, denotes that the factical enactment of every relation is replaced by the Christian enactment. Secondly, the hos is the positive aspect of the ὁς ἢ. It means that a new sense is added on to every existing relation. Every relation must pass through this Christian enactment.

What does all of this mean for how the Christian relates to the world? Even though Heidegger does not explicate these points, they are the logical conclusion of his argument. Every worldly relation and condition must pass through the ὁς ἢ. This means that it factically remains the same, but is enacted differently. Where factical life covers up the enactment by placing its enactment as the only enactment, Christian subjectivity understands that every relation is something to be enacted.156 The consequence of this, which I have already briefly touched upon, is that factical life sees its enactments as the only form of enactment there is and thus as the necessary enactment.

155 Ibid., 86.
156 Ibid.
subjectivity accepts the fact that every enactment is temporally determined and as such contingent. Christian subjectivity lives every relation through this contingency and uncertainty. It lives by accepting that every condition is as it is, but could be otherwise.

Up until now, the world has only been considered in terms of with-world and surrounding world, but what of the self-world. How does the self-world change for Christian subjectivity? As we have seen, factical life focuses exclusively on the self-world and in doing this, it forgets the self-world. The self-world becomes so encompassing for factical life that it can no longer see it as something distinct. In its exclusive focus on the self-world, factical life forgets that the self-world is only a world among others and not the entirety of reality. The self-world, Heidegger notes, is hit the hardest in the shift to Christian subjectivity. The relations in the self-world have to pass through the Christian re-enactment. As Heidegger noted a year before his course on Paul, it is precisely in Christianity that the self-world is discovered.157 This is opposed to factical life, which has completely disregarded the self-world in overemphasizing it.

How are the relations to oneself transformed in Christian subjectivity? Heidegger states:

One should remain in the calling in which one is. The \textit{γεσθενείν} is a \textit{μένειν} [remaining]. In all the radical reorganization, something remains. In what sense is the remaining to be understood? Will it itself be taken into becoming, indeed in such a way that the sense of remaining is, in its What and How, first determined out of having-become? With this, a peculiar complex of sense is indicated: these relations to the surrounding world receive their sense not out of the formal significance they indicate; rather the reverse, the relation and the sense of lived

significance are determined out of the original enactment. Put schematically: something remains unchanged, and yet it is radically changed. Here we have a playground of clever paradoxes, but that does not help us! Pointed formulations explain nothing.\textsuperscript{158}

Again, factically nothing changes. One should remain in the calling one was in, Paul stresses. But what is this remaining, Heidegger asks. This remaining means passing through the $\mu\nu\sigma\mu\nu$, which as we have seen means enacting temporality as such. The meaning of this transformation brings us back to the central question of this chapter, namely what is Christian subjectivity? What kind of shift in life itself does Heidegger discover in Paul?

The relations one has to oneself – simply put, who one is and in which conditions one resides – are passed through the $\mu\nu\sigma\mu\nu$. These remain the same, but at the same time it is accepted that all these conditions are temporally determined. One should no longer, as factical life does, enact them in such a way that these conditions are necessarily the case. The form of the world and thus the factical conditions of life are passing away. In line with my readings of Badiou and Agamben, I shall call this contingency, even though Heidegger himself would deem this term too metaphysical. Factical conditions are contingent in the sense that they are no longer necessary conditions, but rather are lived towards their own negation. Rather, one should accept that they are radically contingent and historically determined. Christian subjectivity, then, is marked by the fact that all conditions remain the same, but one should live them in a radically contingent way.

\textbf{1.7. Community}

\textsuperscript{158} Heidegger, \textit{The Phenomenology of Religious Life}, 84–85.
The final theme I want to discuss is community. As we will see, for Badiou and Agamben community is in the first place political community. Heidegger, however, gives a non-political reading of Paul. In my view, this reading is only possible because of Heidegger’s non-cosmological reading of Paul.

In 1928 Heidegger gave a lecture *Vom Wesen zum Grund* (On the Essence of Ground) in which he, among other things, explicitly addresses Paul’s notion of cosmos. Here Heidegger explicitly claims that cosmos has an anthropological meaning for Paul. While it would be foreshortening to claim that this implies that he must have had the same opinion seven years earlier, it does - in my opinion - shed an important light on Heidegger’s appreciation of Paul and his account of the cosmos.

Paul proclaims the impending *parousia*. Heidegger discusses this in purely anthropological terms. He is only interested in it as an event that changes subjectivity. For Paul, however, the death, resurrection and impending return of Christ were events with a cosmological significance. It did not just change the human subject, but rather the natural world itself. Heidegger seems to ignore this cosmological nature of Paul’s texts. Heidegger even explains Galatians 6:15 – in which Paul states that both the circumcision and the uncircumcision are nothing, but only the new creation matters and which is traditionally read as a cosmological text – in anthropological terms. This leads to a non-cosmological reading of Paul.

Heidegger’s reading of Paul does not entail that there is no concept of community in Heidegger. Even though Heidegger says fairly little explicitly

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about the concept of community, one can easily tease out a concept out of Heidegger’s text. As I have already noted, when Heidegger discusses Paul’s relationship to the Thessalonians, he insists that the transformation of Paul’s being is also the transformation of the being of the Thessalonians. Heidegger states:

We put forth formally the state of the relation of Paul to those who have “given themselves over to him.” Paul experiences the Thessalonians in two determinations: 1. He experiences their having-become (γενηθήναι). 2. He experiences, that they have a knowledge of their having-become (οἴδατε [you know]). That means their having-become is also Paul’s having-become. And Paul is co-affected by their having-become.162

A central aspect of having-become – one that up until now I have not discussed and which gets almost no attention in the secondary scholarship – is that the transformation of being to having-become is never an individual matter. Neither Paul nor any of those who accept his proclamation, have their factical life changed on their own. On the one hand, one is always addressed by the proclamation, which proclaims the possibility of a life that already exists. There is already a community of people whose mode of being is having-become. On the other hand, the proclamation is never addressed to a specific, individual person. Rather, the proclamation is about the possibility of the transformation of life for all. So, having-become is not an individual status, but rather a condition that is open to all and to which all who accept the proclamation belong communally.

Considered in this light, the shift from factical to Christian life gains an entirely new dimension. As I have shown, factical life focuses fully on the self-

162 Ibid., 65.
world, thereby forgetting the with-world, surrounding world and, paradoxically, the self-world itself. Christian life, however, accepts the worldly nature of life. It sees the self-world for what it is, thereby creating space for the with-world and the surrounding world. About this, Heidegger writes:

The surrounding-worldly and communal-worldly connections co-constitute facticity. Christian facticity, then, is essentially communal. The connections to the with-world and the surrounding world constitute Christian facticity. According to Heidegger, these connections should be enacted through the ūs me. For the surrounding world, Heidegger explicitly develops this idea, as I have discussed at length in the previous section. About the with-world, however, Heidegger only remarks that one should comport oneself to it ūs me. The question is: how should this be understood?

About the with-world in Christian life, Heidegger has made two seemingly contradictory remarks: firstly, it constitutes Christian subjectivity and secondly, Christian subjectivity enacts the with-world ūs me. For the surrounding world, Heidegger has explained this in terms of the ūs me, but about the with-world he hardly gives any explanation. Heidegger does suggest, however, that the Christian's relation to the with-world should be understood in a similar way as his relation to the surrounding world. How, then, can the with-world be understood through the ūs me?

The ūs me denotes that a relation is factically unchanged, but is lived in an entirely different way. For the with-world, this means that the relation one

\[\text{163 Ibid., 84.}\]
\[\text{164 Ibid., 85.}\]
\[\text{165 Ibid., 84.}\]
has to others is not factically changed. A neighbor is still a neighbor, a wife a wife and a sister a sister. What changes, however, is the significance it has. Heidegger emphasizes that the ἡδο s mē does not mean that one becomes indifferent towards these relations. The relations to other people remain the same, but are lived in a different way.

As we have seen, in factical life the with-world is forgotten. This does not mean that factical life does not know that there are other people or that these people have their own lives, but rather it does not see the fact that the people close to it are formative for it. The Christian enactment of the with-world is different from the factical enactment. The difference lies precisely in the fact that the Christian can no longer say that he is the only one who matters. The ἡδο s mē negates the dominance of the self-world, thereby opening up space for the with-world. The with-world is, then, enacted in the same way and at the same level as the self-world. So, Christian subjectivity is always involved with other people whose lives have been transformed through the proclamation. This is what it means that Paul’s subjectivity is constituted and co-experienced with the congregation. Christian subjectivity can only be conceived in relation to others and, for the reasons that I have established here, is necessarily communal.

1.8. Conclusion

What is the new subjectivity Heidegger finds in Paul and how does this affect temporality, world, and community? This was the central question of this chapter. Now, what have we seen in this regard? Heidegger engages with Paul by means of the formal indication. This has a double meaning. Firstly, it means

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166 Ibid., 87.
that Heidegger avoids any dogmatic or pre-given reading of Paul. Secondly, it means that Heidegger does not want to give a theoretical determination of Paul’s letters that solidifies the meaning, but rather that he looks at the enactment in play. What Heidegger sets out to discover is how Paul and the primordial Christians enact subjectivity. For Heidegger, one cannot understand Paul and the subjectivity he discusses in his letters by looking at it merely from the content or the relations of primordial Christian life. One has to consider life as it was lived.

To discover how life was lived, and thus what Christian subjectivity is like, Heidegger turns to the oldest and most original letters Paul wrote: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. In reading these letters, however, Heidegger does not turn his attention to the content. The content of these letters seem to be of secondary concern to Heidegger. His interest and the question he asks is: how does Paul’s life relate to the lives of the people to whom he writes? Or, in proper Heideggerian language: how does Paul have the Thessalonians?

Through asking this question, Heidegger finds that the lives of the primordial Christians are characterized by a having-become and by knowledge of their having-become. The Christians – and this includes Paul – have had their being transformed to having-become. Their lives have changed and they have knowledge of this change. This change has been brought about by Paul’s proclamation that the parousia will come very soon and then everything will change. Heidegger’s single-minded focus on the parousia betrays his anthropological interest, in the specific sense as explained in the introduction. Heidegger is only interested in how life is changed and cosmological questions have no place in his reading and explication of Paul.

Having one’s subjectivity transformed to a having-become can only be understood from the shift in temporality it entails. Christian subjectivity turns
out to be a change in the way one enacts temporality. This is why Heidegger stresses from the outset that the historical is the core phenomenon of his entire engagement with Paul and that Christian life lives temporality as such.

What is this changed temporality? Heidegger opposes two forms of enacting temporality: chronological enactment, which is the way factical life enacts temporality, and kairological enactment, which is the way Christian life should enact temporality. Chronological enactment is only interested in security. Factical life wants to have security in life and, as such, wants to overcome contingency. It does this by covering up the historical and temporal character of everything it encounters. It simply pretends that everything it encounters is necessary, eternal and static, thereby making it easier to deal with. Kairological enactment, on the other hand, accepts the temporally and historically determined nature of everything it encounters. It can live with the contingency and insecurity that is part of life.

This kairological enactment of temporality manifests itself in the way Christian subjectivity deals with the world. The world is not an object one can control, but the place in which life is lived. Heidegger further defines the world in three sets of relations. Surrounding world: the relations I have to my environment, with-world: the relations I have to the people around me, and self-world: the relations I have to myself. Christian subjectivity lives all these relations through the ἡστάσεως μη. All relations should be enacted 'as if not'. The relations remain the same, but they should be lived in such a way that they are not final and determinate. Every relation should be lived contingently. Time has grown short; the form of the world is passing away. Everything which factical life deemed important has been brought to naught. One can only enact one's own subjectivity in the radical insecurity of contingency.
In this chapter we have seen how Heidegger re-enacts the letters of Paul and discovers a form of subjectivity marked by the contingency of kairological temporality. We shall see how this relates to Badiou and Agamben’s readings of Paul in the next two chapters.
Chapter 2: Badiou. The division of subjectivity

2.1. Introduction

The second of the three books on Paul in contemporary philosophy that I will discuss in this dissertation is Alain Badiou’s book *Saint Paul. The Foundation of Universalism*. Badiou’s book on Paul – which first came to the attention of English speaking audiences through Slavoj Žižek’s engagement with it in *The Ticklish Subject* – also served as Badiou’s own philosophical claim to fame. Even though Badiou wrote it in 1997, several years after his 1988 magnum opus *Being and Event*, his *Saint Paul* was one of his first works to be translated into English.

In my view, Badiou attempts to do two separate, but related things in his book. Firstly, Badiou discusses Paul and Paul’s thought. Badiou gives a thought-provoking analysis of Paul’s thinking and the radicalness of his ways. Secondly, Badiou uses Paul to elaborate on his own theory of the event. As I will show, the scholarship focuses almost exclusively on the latter aspect, while the former is forgotten. This leads to a lop-sided reading of this book.

A lop-sided reading of Badiou seems to be symptomatic for the reception of his work as a whole. As Ashton et al. note in *The Praxis of Alain Badiou*...

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Badiou, the body of secondary literature on Badiou’s work can be divided in four groups. I partly agree with their assessment, but I want to make a few changes to it. Firstly, I believe the distinction they make between two of their groups is somewhat ill founded, so I propose to collapse those groups into one. Secondly, I want to add two other groups to their analysis to account for the expansion in the secondary literature on Badiou in the years between the publication of *The Praxis of Alain Badiou* in 2006 and now. 170

The first group are the introductory works on Badiou. Because he is a relatively ‘new’ philosopher, many scholars have taken it upon themselves to write an introduction to Badiou’s admittedly difficult system of thought. Not only is there a growing number of dedicated introductions to Badiou, but almost every piece of secondary literature on him gives a short introduction of the main aspects of his system. This dissertation will be no exception to that rule. In the case of Badiou, there is a justifiable reason for this, because he has a complex system that plays a role in all of his work. It is impossible to understand him properly without having some knowledge of his theory of the event. 171


A second approach to Badiou’s work are the critiques. These are articles or books that take either Badiou’s entire system or specific claims he makes and criticize or evaluate these. Interestingly enough, most of the criticisms on Badiou are a variation on Hallward’s and Žižek’s criticism that Badiou’s theory of the event leads to an ideology. As Bosteels rightly notes, however, most critics fail to see the appreciation both Hallward and Žižek have for Badiou. Furthermore, I want to point out that this criticism misunderstands Badiou. As I will show in this chapter, becoming a subject of the event and having faith in it, does not mean believing in the event with a blind dogmatism, but rather it means – to say it with Heidegger – that one enacts the event in life.

Thirdly, some scholars assimilate certain parts of Badiou’s work and apply these to their own, more general projects. Ashton et al. separate this from

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Bosteels, *Badiou and Politics*, xi.

a fourth group – the approach they want to take in The Praxis of Alain Badiou – in which Badiou’s thought is applied to different situations and problems in a systematic way. The difference between these two groups would, then, be the extent in which Badiou is used. In my view, these two categories are actually the same. Separating these groups, means applying a criterion of completeness in the use of the work of a philosopher. Rather, I would take this as one group of literature, which – systematically or not – applies Badiou’s work to different problems and contexts.


Fourthly, there is a very small, but steadily increasing body of work on
Badiou, which thinks through his work in a historical, exegetical or systematic
way. With most philosophers, the better part of the scholarly work written
about them is of this sort, but in the case of Badiou – and also Agamben as we
will see in the next chapter – this type of work is almost non-existent. It is no
surprise that Ashton et al. do not define this group, because the small number
of books and articles that belong to this group were published after 2006.176

The final group of work one can find in the secondary literature on
Badiou is the (a)theological group. This is actually closer to a sub-group of the
systematic approach than a group in its own right, but since this group far
outnumbers the systematic, historical or exegetical readings of Badiou, it
deserves to be a group of its own. Badiou’s work is often confronted with
theology and religion. There are a number of reasons for this tendency. The


176 The number one contributor to this group is actually Alain Badiou himself again. In a certain
way, the best systematic analysis of his theory of the event is his own sequel to Being and Event,
Logics of Worlds. See Alain Badiou, Logics of Worlds, trans. Alberto Toscano (London/New
York, NY: Continuum, 2009); Next to that one could say that Badiou’s earlier works are also
preconfigurations and as such explanations of his theory of the event, see: Alain Badiou, Theory
of the Subject, trans. Bruno Bosteels (London/New York, NY: Continuum, 2009); Alain Badiou,
Theoretical Writings, trans. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (London/New York, NY:
Continuum, 2004); and Alain Badiou, Ethics. An Essay on the Understanding of Evil,
trans. Peter Hallward (London/New York, NY: Verso, 2001); some secondary, systematic engagements with
Badiou are: Oliver Marchart, Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in
Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Sam
2008); Gert-Jan van der Heiden, Ontology after Ontotheology: Plurality, Event, and Contingency
in Contemporary Philosophy (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2014); Burhanuddin
Baki, Badiou’s Being and Event and the Mathematics of Set Theory (London/New York, NY:
Bloomsbury, 2015).
first and most obvious reason is Badiou’s engagement with Paul, which got him the attention of many authors working in religion and theology. Secondly, Badiou’s theory of the event lends itself well to think about religion and transcendence, because – in a certain reading – the event is a transcendent element in Badiou’s thought. It is considered to be transcendent, because it is an element that breaks into the world. Thirdly, even though Badiou is expressly anti-theological, anti-religious and anti-Christian, he has a great admiration for Paul, Pascal and Kierkegaard, all of whom were thinkers on religion. Because of this, a number of scholars have written about the (a)theological element in Badiou.  

This chapter will be somewhere in-between the fourth and the fifth group. I will engage with Badiou in a systematic, critical way, but mainly with his book on Saint Paul. Because of this focus, this chapter will discuss the question of religion in Badiou, although I will leave the problem of Badiou’s (a)theological philosophy fully aside. Furthermore, I will not focus on Badiou’s theory of the event as such – which is a completely formal theory – but only on this theory insofar as it applies to Badiou’s reading of Paul. In that sense, this chapter can also be seen as an application of Badiou’s theory of the event to a different context, namely to Paul.

In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the question of why Badiou reads Paul and which Paul he reads. (2.2) Next, I will discuss Badiou’s ‘methodology’ in reading Paul, which amounts to – as should be clear by now – an introduction of his theory of the event in general. (2.3). Thereafter, I will look at what kind of new conception of subjectivity Badiou finds in Paul. (2.4) Finally, I will look at how this subjectivity affects the subjectivity’s temporality (2.5), world (2.6) and community (2.7).

2.2. Paul

In the case of Heidegger answering the question of why he reads Paul means going into sources outside of his lectures on Paul. For Badiou this is different. Badiou explains why he, as a philosopher, reads Paul at the beginning of his book. He writes:

Why Saint Paul? Why solicit this “apostle” who is all the more suspect for having, it seems, proclaimed himself such and whose name is frequently tied to Christianity’s least open, most institutional aspects: the Church, moral discipline, social conservatism, suspiciousness toward Jews? How are we to inscribe this name into the development of our project: to refound a theory of the Subject that subordinates its existence to the aleatory dimension of the event as well as to the pure contingency of multiple-being without sacrificing the theme of freedom?\textsuperscript{178}

Badiou reads Paul because through Paul he is able to refound a theory of the subject, which he formally established in his theory of the event. Even though Badiou established the formal and theoretical conditions for the event and the ensuing subject, in Paul this connection is lived, or in more Heideggerian terms: enacted. This is why Paul is, for Badiou, a poet-thinker of the event.

\textsuperscript{178} Badiou, \textit{Saint Paul}, 4.
For Badiou, however, Paul is not just a historical example of a theorist of the event. Rather, Badiou argues, Paul is our contemporary. Badiou notes that Paul is very distant from ‘us’ in a threefold sense. Paul lived two thousand years ago, he founded the church and he centers thought upon a fable. Still, in a stronger sense Paul is our contemporary. Badiou gives the following reason for it:

This is why Paul, himself the contemporary of a monumental figure of the destruction of all polities (the beginnings of that military despotism known as “the Roman Empire”), interests us in the highest degree. He is the one who, assigning to the universal a specific connection of law and the subject, asks himself with the most extreme rigor what price is to be paid for this assignment, by the law as well as by the subject. This interrogation is precisely our own. Supposing we were able to refound the connection between truth and the subject, then what consequences must we have the strength to hold fast to, on the side of truth (evental [événementielle] and hazardous) as well as on the side of the subject (rare and heroic)?

According to Badiou, Paul thinks the possibility of the happening of a radically new event. This happens against the background of the Roman Empire, which Badiou sees as an example of a totalitarian state. It is totalitarian, because it does not have room for truth and so it cannot accept the event. Paul’s proclamation is directed against this empire. This is, Badiou argues, also the task for contemporary people. We too are confronted with a totalitarian system – this time capitalism – that has no place for truth. Paul is our contemporary, then, because he can guide us in the endeavour of becoming a subject of truth.

179 Ibid., 5.
180 Ibid., 7.
beyond the law of the state, which does not allow this. For this reason, Badiou continually emphasizes the militancy of Paul. 181

In Paul, Badiou finds a figure who speaks about the conditions of possibility of a new form of subjectivity, namely a subjectivity that is constituted in opposition to the current laws and norms. Badiou formally developed this new subjectivity in Being and Event, but in Paul one can find this form of subjectivity articulated in a concrete situation.

Even though Badiou wants to read Paul in a fully formal way without accepting any kind of truth in Paul’s claim, I will show that 1) Badiou actually discusses and is indebted to the contents of Paul’s thoughts to a great extent and that 2) Badiou’s reading of Paul becomes all the stronger when using this content.

2.3. Philosophical background

Although Badiou does not expressly address the question of method in his book on Paul, the philosophical ‘method’ he uses to read Paul already becomes apparent in the prologue of his book. For Badiou Paul is:

[...] a poet-thinker of the event, as well as one who practices and states the invariant traits of what can be called the militant figure. 182

Badiou, then, understands Paul as someone who articulates Badiou’s theory of the event and he reads Paul as such.

181 Ibid., 2.
182 Ibid.
In the following, I will give a concise introduction to Badiou’s theory of the event. It will be concise in that I will only discuss the main points and a few specifics which are necessary for understanding Badiou’s reading of Paul and the interpretation I give of that reading. I am well aware that I will not do justice to all the intricacies of Badiou’s thinking in this way, but as I have already noted the goal of this chapter is not to give an interpretation of Badiou’s theory of the event. Rather, I want to uncover what Badiou finds in Paul, who for Badiou is a paradigmatic thinker of the event.

One can obviously object to this by saying that for Badiou his reading of Paul is subjugated to his theory of the event and that his *Saint Paul* is nothing more than an example to his *Being and Event*. I would object to this, however, that the subject one can find in Badiou’s Paul is different from the subject of his theory of the event, because the Pauline subject is a subject formed by an event that has a concrete content. While every concrete subject is formed by an event that happens in a specific context, Badiou claims that he reads Paul in a formal manner divorced of any specific content. As I will show later in the chapter, Badiou does not succeed in this reading. Part of his analysis of Paul’s theory of the event is dependent on the specific content of Paul’s letters. This dependence makes the Pauline subject something more than an example of the merely formal subject of *Being and Event*, which Badiou claims it actually is.

Badiou’s theory of the event follows the following procedure: there is a certain order of the world. This order is based on ontology, which Badiou considers to be mathematics. Within the system of this ontology, an event is that which happens outside of the ontological order. The event is not part of the ontology, but comes from outside of it. As such, the event is trans-being. What
the event does, is instate a truth. This truth creates subjects that are faithful to it. These subjects are tasked with doing the work of the event.

Badiou most fully establishes a theory of the event in *Being and Event*. The title of this book — of which the Heideggerian influence is quite obvious — connects two terms: being and event. The book starts out with being and then moves to the event. It is only possible to understand the event in connection to what Badiou understands being to be.

Badiou’s ontology essentially stems from a single decision, namely the decision to ground ontology in set theory. According to him, set theory offers an alternative to traditional metaphysics. Set theory is a mathematical tool that enables Badiou to think multiplicity as such. The multiple becomes the most basic element of this ontological system. With set theory it is possible to think multiplicity as such. An ontology of multiplicity is a way to overcome the ontotheological structure of metaphysics, because a set of all sets is impossible, that is, there is no way to think totality.\(^{183}\)

Badiou, then, introduces set theory into ontology to avoid unicity and transcendence. The basic principle behind set theory is that it orders elements into sets. For example, the set of all natural numbers between 0 and 6 consists of the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. These elements are not limited to numbers. Another example will make this clear. Look outside at the sky. In the sky there are bound to be some clouds. These clouds can be collected into the set of all the clouds in the sky. This set contains all clouds in existence. All the individual clouds are elements of this set.

Ontologically set theory works the same: it collects ontological elements into sets, but why is this turn to set theory necessary? According to

\(^{183}\) Miller, *Badiou, Marion and St Paul: Immanent Grace*, 117.
Badiou, set theory is the only way to overcome a metaphysics of unity and transcendence. Set theory has two important characteristics that let it function for an ontology, namely the fact that it can handle multiples as multiples and the fact that it is—like all mathematics—axiomatic.

Regarding the first, Badiou is well aware of the metaphysical tendency to regard the one as having primacy over the many. However, it is exactly the other way around. The multiple precedes the one. The problem is that the multiple as such is not thinkable. To be able to grasp the multiple one has to count every multiple as one.184

The second characteristic of set theory is arguably even more important. Set theory is axiomatic; it has propositions at its core that are improvable within set theory itself. Without being able to prove them these axioms depend on a decision. Badiou’s ontology is also axiomatic. His set ontology is grounded on two decisions, two axioms. These axioms reject the principles of unity and transcendence.

The first ontological decision Badiou makes, is that being is essentially multiple. One can object to this that every multiple has to be made up of singular elements; every multiple is a multiple of something. To a certain extent Badiou would agree with this. It is true that every multiple that we can understand is made up of a collection of smaller multiples. This is the multiple that presents itself to us in everyday experience. Badiou calls this the consistent multiple.185 However—and this is where Badiou’s ontological decision comes to the fore—underneath this multiple, underlying these singulars is another multiple. This is the inconsistent multiple. It is the pure multiple that precedes

185 Ibid., 25.
any and every count. As such it cannot be made up out of singular elements, because the singular – the one – can only exist after the count. It is this pure multiple which makes up the consistent multiple. In this way the multiple is the most basic unit in Badiou’s set ontology.\(^ {186}\)

The second decision Badiou makes is the rejection of transcendence. According to Badiou, the couple transcendence/immanence has always been linked to finite/infinite. However, Badiou argues that this link is not proper. About this Badiou writes:

The couple infinite/finite distributes being-in-totality within the unshaken framework of substantialism, which figures being, whether it is divine or natural, as τόδε τι, singular essence, thinkable solely according to the affirmative disposition of its limit.\(^ {187}\)

Badiou claims here that in metaphysics the finite and the infinite are both subjugated to being as such. Both finitude and infinity are purely immanent. It is nothing more than a division within the totality of entities. Here Badiou exposes the infinite as being non-transcendent. However, instead of rejecting infinity on these grounds, he makes another ontological decision. Badiou radicalizes this immanent conception of infinity and applies it to his set ontology.

To do this, Badiou needs to rethink infinity in an immanent way. For this he turns to Cantor. In his work on mathematical set theory, Cantor had already introduced a fully secular conception of infinity.\(^ {188}\) He found a mathematical way to conceive of infinity in an immanent way without resorting

\(^ {186}\) Ibid.
\(^ {187}\) Ibid., 143.
to the banal conception of the infinite as an ever-growing, ever-progressing series of numbers. By turning to Cantor, Badiou can retain the qualitatively infinite while – at the same time – he can also make it immanent and definable in numbers. Translated to Badiou’s set ontology, this means that the infinite is real, immanent and useable. With this conception of infinity in hand, Badiou decides being to be infinite.

Now that the two underlying ontological decisions have been established, Badiou’s set ontology can be clarified. The question at hand is: how does Badiou translate mathematical set theory into an ontology?

The most important step is translating the concept of the set to an ontology. To do this, Badiou introduces the term *situation*. By using situation instead of set, Badiou is able to give a theoretical definition while still alluding to reality. As was noted earlier, for Badiou only the multiple is. The one is not; it is just an operator to understand a multiple as one. The situation is a multiplicity that is united under the operator of the count-as-one. Simply put, a situation is a multiplicity that is grouped together in some way. For example, in a school all the entities are part of the situation of ‘school’, which is a single name for a multiplicity.

Of course, it is clear to everyone that a situation is not limited to its terms. A situation can change and there are vast amounts of unpresented multiples in every situation. For example: imagine any random room. This room probably contains some furniture, a door and maybe some people. This collection is the situation of the room. Now, that door opens and someone walks in. The situation has changed; it contains an extra element. This element

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189 Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject To Truth*, 68.
191 Ibid., 24.
was unpresented in the first situation, but one cannot claim that this man came into existence the moment he walked into the room.

In the situation without the extra person – let’s call it situation 0 – the situation where the person walked in – situation 1 – cannot be counted as one; that is to say, it does not exist yet and is, in Badiou’s terms, unpresented. Similarly, in situation 1 situation 0 is unpresented. So, Badiou argues, apparently every situation infinitely exceeds the presentation of it. In every real situation, there is an infinite amount of possible, unpresented situations. In this way, infinity becomes a basic element of Badiou’s theory.

Now, how does the event fit into this set ontology? The event is not a concept in set theory, but it is a philosophical concept that Badiou introduces into this discourse of set-ontology. As we have already seen, the theory of the event tries to think the conditions of possibility of the new. The event is needed for something new to happen, but why is this the case for Badiou?

Badiou’s set ontology contains an infinite amount of situations made up of an infinite amount of elements. All these elements, however, serve as material for sets. There is no element, no entity, which cannot be presented, in a possible situation. Even though there is an infinite excess of situations in Badiou’s set ontology, all these situations belong to ontology. For Badiou this makes the new impossible. Every possible situation is just a recombination of the same elements, however many there may be, in different sets. For Badiou, this makes every situation fundamentally one of predictability and not of novelty.

To think the new, Badiou needs something that is not already contained in ontology to break into it, thereby making something truly new possible. This is the event. The first thing Badiou notes about the event is that it is local. It enters into a situation. This has two consequences. Firstly, the event is
effectuated in a concrete time and place and secondly, the event does not supersede the state or even the situation. Rather, it enters the situation as an extra element. To take this point even further: the event enters the situation at its lowest level. That is: it is part of one of the multiples that is part of the situation. These multiples can only be presented in the situation as one. So, the event is a part of an element of the situation. However, from the perspective of the situation – the perspective that we inhabit – only what is presented, a multiple, can be perceived. The consequence of this is that the event itself is not perceivable. The event is a new element introduced into the situation. It intervenes in the situation, but is not part of the excess. As such, it is also not part of the state. Although it is presented in the situation, it is not represented in the state. So, the event withdraws itself from the control of the state and the demands of normality.

This novelty is exactly why the event establishes a truth. The event introduces an element, which previously did not exist into a situation. In doing this, the situation is changed. Through this intervention a truth of the situation arises, which, according to Badiou, is inherently new. The introduction of the truth leads to a new paradigm or status quo in a situation. For reasons that will be established later, Badiou limits the happening of an event and the ensuing truth to four domains, namely: politics, science, art and love.

192 Ibid., 179.
193 It is at this point where the political implications of Badiou’s ontology become apparent. The state – both in the ontological as well as the political sense – has no control over the event. It is transgressive and new. The most important examples are, for Badiou, the French Revolution and of course, May ’68.
194 Badiou, Being and Event, 99.
195 Ibid., 339.
The truth is not static. Rather, it is an unfolding procedure. Truth becomes manifest over time. It is not, however, truth which does this. To do the work of truth, the event makes subjects. The subject is the faithful, local configuration of a truth. By being faithful to the event and by doing the work of the truth, a human being is transformed into a subject. I will more closely examine Badiou’s figure of the subject, as he finds it expressed in Paul, in this chapter.

2.4. Subjectivity

Now, to return to the main question of this chapter: how does Badiou find a new form of subjectivity in Paul? In section 2.3 I have shown how Badiou’s theory of the event – which serves as a reading key for his interpretation of Paul – functions formally. To recapitulate: an event breaks into the situation and its status quo. People start testifying to this event, thereby becoming subjects and enacting the universal truth of the event. This is no different in Badiou’s reading of Paul, except – as I have mentioned before – in Paul this formal procedure has a content. To understand Badiou’s interpretation of Pauline subjectivity, the ‘Pauline theory of the event’ should be discussed.

After discussing why and how Badiou engages with Paul in the first three chapters of his Saint Paul, Badiou begins his actual reading of Paul in chapter four. In chapter four, Badiou analyses how Paul understood his own world. According to Badiou, Paul defines his world in terms of the apparent dichotomy between Jew and Greek. Badiou writes:

196 Ibid., 396.
Yet consistently, Paul only explicitly mentions two entities – the Jews and the Greeks – as if [...] with these two referents, the multiple of the ethne had been exhausted. 197

For Paul, the entire known world was made up of Jews and Greeks. Badiou problematizes this. It is obviously untrue that everyone was either a Jew or a Greek. Rather, there was a multiplicity of ethne, different people. However, Paul subsumes all of these ethne under the term ‘Greek’. This is a strange thing to say, because – and this is Badiou’s implicit assumption – Paul was a well-travelled man and thus must have been aware of all the different people with different customs whom he calls Greek. Why, then, does Paul insist on this opposition? What is the meaning of this binary representation of the situation in which he lived? Badiou answers this as follows:

In reality, “Jew” and “Greek” are subjective dispositions. More precisely, they refer to what Paul considers to be the two coherent intellectual figures of the world he inhabits, or what could be called regimes of discourse. When theorizing about the Jew and the Greek, Paul is in fact presenting us with a schema of discourses. And this schema is designed to position a third discourse, his own, in such a way as to render its complete originality apparent. 198

Badiou presents the Jew/Greek opposition as a theory of discourses. Both Jew and Greek are ways of thinking. Against these two positions, Badiou opposes Paul’s own, Christian position. However, the Christian discourse is not a third discourse next to the other two, but it works on an entirely different level. This is because the Christian discourse is instated by the event, whereas the Greek and Jewish discourses are consequences of the old situation in which no event

197 Badiou, Saint Paul, 40.
198 Ibid., 41.
has happened. Before turning to the content of the two discourses, the concept of a discourse should be thematized.

There are a number of terms which all refer to this same phenomenon, such as subjective disposition, way of thinking, regime of discourse and intellectual figure. All of these different terms denote the same phenomenon. What is this phenomenon of the discourse? It is both a system of language and a law that determines thought and life. It is a set system of symbols and signifiers which people cannot reject without rejecting the entire social order. Now, what are these two discourses that Paul mentions? I will quote Badiou at length here.

What is Jewish discourse? The subjective figure constituted by it is that of the prophet. But a prophet is one who abides in the requisition of signs, one who signals, testifying to transcendence by exposing the obscure to its deciphering. Thus, Jewish discourse will be held to be, above all, the discourse of the sign.

What then is Greek discourse? The subjective figure constituted by it is that of the wise man. But wisdom consists in appropriating the fixed order of the world, in the matching of the logos to being. Greek discourse is cosmic, deploying the subject within the reason of a natural totality. Greek discourse is essentially the discourse of totality, insofar as it upholds the *sophia* (wisdom as internal state) of a knowledge of *phusis* (nature as ordered and accomplished deployment of being). 199

Jewish discourse is the discourse of the sign. The world is encrypted and can only be understood in its reference to the One. The prophet, the figure of Jewish discourse, is the one who can understand the world, because he possesses the cypher of reality. He can decrypt the world and understand it through the signs he receives. Greek discourse is the discourse of wisdom. The

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199 Ibid.
wise man is he who understands the logos of being, the way the world works. Greek discourse is about understanding the totality of reality. However, these two discourses are actually complicit.

Badiou argues that both discourses try to exert mastery over reality; they try to influence the order of the world. 200 The Jew does this through the exception to which everything refers, and the Greek does this through understanding the cosmic totality. Even though the particular approach is different, both the Jew and the Greek aim at mastering the universe. They both try to exert control over things by understanding the law of the universe, either through the all or the one. Because both of these discourses attempt to understand totality, they both claim to be universal. However, Badiou explicitly rejects the universality of both the Jewish and the Greek discourse.

Badiou gives two reasons why the two discourses cannot be considered to be universal. Firstly, each of the discourses presupposes the other and secondly, both discourses presuppose that they can exert mastery over the universe through a law. 201 Badiou can only claim this, because he has a very specific conception of the universal in relation to the event. What this conception is will be established in greater detail later on. For now, it is enough to note that for Badiou universality is not the opposite of particularity. Universality is not the totality of all particulars. This form of universality, which is the form the Greek and the Jew claim to possess, encompasses everything that is. But, as we have seen, for Badiou there is also something that

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200 Ibid., 42.
201 Ibid.
eludes this totality, namely the event. What the universality of the Greek and
the Jew can never account for is that which is not in the strict sense of the word
and this is precisely what the event is. Only the event, which spans both that
which is and that which is not, can be truly universal.

It is, however, in the situation of Jewish discourse that the event, of
which Paul testifies, happens. Because the event is radically new, it breaks with
the old, Jewish discourse. Even though the event happens in the situation, the
event cannot be expressed in its language and cannot be subsumed under its
law. Badiou emphasizes that the event of Christ must be unrelated to the Jewish
discourse with regards to the effects of its truth. Regardless of the event’s
irreducibility to the situation, the event does happen in a situation. The event
cannot happen in a vacuum, but always happens in a specific, concrete
situation. In this way, and in this way alone, the event is structurally related to
the discourse in which it originates.

Now, what is this event about which Paul speaks? What happened
which could not be understood in Jewish or Greek discourse? According to
Badiou, this is the resurrection. He writes:

[T]he Resurrection [...] is not, in Paul’s own eyes, of the order of fact, falsifiable
or demonstrable. It is pure event, opening of an epoch, transformation of the
relations between the possible and the impossible. For the interest of Christ’s
resurrection does not lie in itself, as it would in the case of a particular, or
miraculous, fact. Its genuine meaning is that it testifies to the possible victory

202 Alain Badiou, “Huit Thèses sur l’Universel” (Centre International d’Étude de la Philosophie
Française Contemporaine, November 19, 2004), accessed at June 5, 2017 through
over death, a death that Paul envisages, as we shall see later in detail, not in terms of facticity, but in terms of subjective disposition.\textsuperscript{203}

The resurrection of Christ is the event that interrupts both Jewish and Greek discourses. It is, also according to Paul, not of the order of fact. The resurrection demands a new conceptuality in order for it to be understood. The event opens a new epoch. This is, however, almost everything Badiou says about the resurrection itself.\textsuperscript{204} Badiou cannot say more about this, because one can actually say remarkably little about an event. The event is not a part of ontology and as such withdraws itself from knowledge and language. One can only know the event through its consequences, namely the procedure of truth it initiates and the subjects who are faithful to this truth.

Before moving on to the effects of the resurrection, two remarks need to be made about the ‘evental’ character of the resurrection. Firstly, although the resurrection is the event proper, it is not the event that transformed Paul into a subject. At least not directly. Paul became what Badiou calls a subject to this event of the resurrection on the road to Damascus. On the road to Damascus, Paul was struck blind, saw Christ and started to believe. This is Paul’s ‘conversion’.\textsuperscript{205} What happened to Paul was, as Badiou calls it, like a thunderbolt. It was completely sudden and unexpected. At that moment Paul became an ‘I am’ for the first time. He became a subject to this event, which happened before. What he experienced, however, was not the event itself. Badiou writes:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{203} Badiou, \textit{Saint Paul}, 45.
\textsuperscript{204} Badiou also remarks that Christ’s resurrection necessarily has to be our resurrection. See Ibid. The meaning of this remark is that the event has to be able to make subjects, otherwise it would be powerless and meaningless.
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 17.
\end{quote}
Clearly, the encounter on the road mimics the founding event. Just as the Resurrection remains totally incalculable and it is from there that one must begin, Paul’s faith is that from which he begins as a subject, and nothing leads up to it. The event – “it happened,” purely and simply, in the anonymity of a road – is the subjective sign of the event proper that is the Resurrection of Christ. Within Paul himself, it is the (re)surgence of the subject.

What Paul experienced, then, is a repetition of the event. It is the continuing activity of the original event. What is interesting about this is that this aspect of the theory of the event is not present in Badiou’s Being and Event. This repetition of the event in a different context, however, is a necessary aspect in order to have a robust theory of the event. One needs to account for the fact that people can become subjects to an event after its initial occurrence. Otherwise, the continuing activity of the event – which according to Badiou Paul calls hope – is impossible. Unfortunately, in Saint Paul Badiou does not take up this task. He only discusses the case of Paul. In Logics of Worlds, Badiou does discuss how an event can be – the Pauline influence is clear here – resurrected.

In Logics of Worlds, Badiou uses the term resurrection to indicate the way in which a single event can remain effective even after time has passed. The example Badiou uses to make this point is the slave revolt of Spartacus. Badiou recounts how numerous slave insurrections in recent history – he mentions Haiti and Rosa Luxembourgh among others – have appropriated the name and the event of Spartacus for themselves. Even though the event happened in the past, its truth is resurrected in another time. Why does Badiou

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206 Ibid.
208 Badiou, Logics of Worlds, 64–65.
speak of resurrection in this regard? Because the event – which at some point had lost its potency – is revitalized in a new context. The truth of the original event regains its effectiveness, because people start using the same name in a different context.

The question is: what happens to these events in between their original occurrence and their resurrection? According to Badiou, an event can lose its effectiveness in two ways. On the one hand, an event can be continually denied, thereby making the name ineffective. If this happens, then the event has no consequences and we have to conclude that there never was an event to begin with. On the other hand, an event can also be institutionalised. If an event gains so much traction that its name is appropriated by the ruling regime and becomes a power of exclusion, then it loses its evental nature. The name of the event gains a concrete meaning within the post-evental constellation, thereby stripping it of its power. At that point the event and its name became regular concepts in a discourse. Because an event loses its effectiveness in this way, it needs to be resurrected for it to regain its potency in a different context.

In Paul’s case, the event of the resurrection is resurrected into his life in the Damascene experience. It is a resurrection by virtue of Paul naming the experience he had on the road to Damascus ‘resurrection’ and subsequently faithfully proclaiming the truth of the event. In this way, Badiou can explain how people who did not experience the original event can still become a subject to it.

The second remark about the ‘evental’ character of the resurrection of Christ is on the first glance more destructive. From the start of Saint Paul, Badiou emphasizes the fact that even though Paul follows the structure of the

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209 Ibid., 62–63.
event and its consequences to the letter, there was in reality no event. The resurrection is not an event, because it was not real. Rather, the resurrection is a fable. About this Badiou writes:

Let us be perfectly clear: so far as we are concerned, what we are dealing with here is precisely a fable. And singularly so in the case of Paul, who for crucial reasons reduces Christianity to a single statement: Jesus is resurrected. Yet this is precisely a fabulous element [point fabuleux], since all the rest, birth, teachings, death, might after all be upheld. A “fable” is that part of a narrative that, so far as we are concerned, fails to touch on any Real, unless it be by virtue of that invisible and indirectly accessible residue sticking to every obvious imaginary. In this regard, it is to its element of fabulation [point de fable] alone that Paul reduces the Christian narrative, with the strength of one who knows that in holding fast to this point as real, one is unburdened of all the imaginary that surrounds it. 210

This raises an important problem. If, as Badiou claims, there is no “real” in the resurrection, then Paul becomes a theoretician of a fiction. If this is the case, then it is, in my opinion, very problematic to focus on Paul as an example for thinking the event, when there are so many other historical examples of real events. In the following, I will examine Badiou’s claim and try to understand why he claims the resurrection is not an event, but rather a fable. I will do this by addressing two questions, namely: why does Badiou still read Paul if there was actually never an event and why does Badiou claim that there is no real to the resurrection?

Regarding the first question, Badiou reads Paul because Paul thinks about the event in the purest way possible. Because the resurrection does not

contain any real, Paul ends up talking about the structures of the event. This is why Badiou does not call Paul a subject to the event, but rather a poet-thinker of the event.

Now, on to the second question: why does Badiou claim that there is no real in the resurrection? Why is it a fable? As has been established in the discussion of Badiou’s theory of the event, an event can only happen in one of four domains. To recapitulate, these domains are: love, politics, science and art. Religion is not one of Badiou’s domains. Because of this the resurrection cannot be an event. Why does Badiou limit the possibility of truth to these four domains? In his 2003 book, Peter Hallward addresses this question directly. Hallward writes:

Why these particular four domains? Because they mark out the possible instances of the subject as variously individual or collective. Love obtains in the “situational sphere of the individual.” Love affects only “the individuals concerned . . . , and it is thus for them [alone] that the one-truth produced by their love is an indiscernible part of their existence.” Politics, on the other hand, concerns only the collective dimension, that is, a generic equality without exception. And in “mixed situations” – situations with an individual vehicle but a collective import – art and science qualify as generic to the degree that they effect a pure invention or discovery beyond the mere transmission of knowledges.

In Badiou’s view, truth can only happen in these four specific domains, because only in these domains something new can happen. In these domains something can happen which rejects the strict logic of the previous situation.

212 Badiou, Saint Paul, 2.
213 Hallward, Badiou: A Subject To Truth, 181.
This is specific to these four domains. All other domains of human experience do not have this characteristic.\(^{214}\) In all other domains what is called ‘new’ is a production of ‘material’ goods, that is, everything that is produced in it can be and is taken up in the state of the situation.\(^{215}\)

The question is, however, whether Badiou has valid grounds to restrict events to these four domains. In his review of a number of books written by Badiou, Nicholas Brown notes that Badiou does not give proper philosophical arguments to exclude religion or business from being a domain in which truth can happen.\(^{216}\) Badiou does not get any further than simply stating that there is no space for the new in any domain apart from the paradigmatic four. The only argument Badiou does give is that all four of these domains and only these domains do not deal with facts, but rather with truth. Truth, in turn, can never be subsumed by knowledge. Is this, however, a proper ground to limit truth to these four domains and specifically to deny that there is truth in Paul?

In his excellent article, Roland Boer notes that religion haunts Badiou’s theory of the event in *Being and Event*. Many of the examples Badiou uses come from the Christian theological tradition.\(^{217}\) This does not immediately mean that religion is one of the domains of truth. It does, however, call into question Badiou’s reduction of the resurrection to a fable. At many points in *Being and Event* and especially in *Saint Paul*, Badiou establishes how the

\(^{214}\) Ibid., 182.

\(^{215}\) Badiou, *Being and Event*, 339.


structure of events happens again and again in the history of Christianity.\textsuperscript{218} Still, Badiou insists on the fact that in Christianity there is no “real”.

Because many moments in Christianity, and especially Saint Paul, follow Badiou’s theory of the event so closely, it is hard to imagine that there is no event in Christianity. A vehement defender of Badiou would argue that there is no event in Saint Paul, because – as history has shown – the ‘event’ about which Paul speaks was taken up in the ‘state’ in the form of Christianity. As we have seen in Heidegger and we will see again in Agamben, however, one can effectively divorce Paul’s primordial Christian message from Christianity and even use it as a criticism of the manifold historical occurrences of Christianity. So, even when one admits that the name of the event of the resurrection has been taken up in the state of Christianity, one can still accept that the resurrection was an event. The name of the French Revolution – Badiou’s beloved example – was also taken up by the Reign of Terror following it and by president – later emperor – Napoleon III.

Boer, however, goes one step further than simply arguing that Badiou is mistaken by his characterization of the resurrection as a fable. Rather, he is fascinated by it and asks how we can understand this characterization in a positive manner.\textsuperscript{219} Boer questions the distinction between truth and fable Badiou makes. As we have seen, it is impossible to determine whether an event has happened or not based on the event itself. One can only decide this based on the consequences of the event. One can only rely on the testimony of the faithful subjects of an event for this.\textsuperscript{220} Even Badiou himself would have to admit that Paul – and with him at least the early Christians – follows the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{218} Ibid., 238.
\item \textsuperscript{219} Ibid., 244–45.
\item \textsuperscript{220} Ibid., 245.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
structure of being subjects to the letter. In fact, this is what interests Badiou in Paul. Based on this Boer rightly concludes that truth and the fable are at least structurally the same. 221

Boer, however, takes this one step further. Because every event is unknowable in the logic of the situation and every truth subtracts itself from being encompassed by the state, Boer claims that every proper truth is actually a fable. He writes:

[I]t is not that truth procedures have some element of the fabulous about them, but that a truth is necessarily fabulous. Indeed, let me push Badiou here and argue that the very strength of Paul’s central claim – that Jesus is resurrected – is that it is pure fable, that it is not tied to any element of the ‘earthly’ life of Jesus, or, more generally, any historical conditions or causes. It is not falsifiable or verifiable in terms of the order of fact, according to any of the canons of scientific or historical enquiry. And this fable of the resurrection has all of the procedures of truth in a paradigmatic fashion – the naming of the event as a truth, a militant movement characterized by fidelity and certainty. It seems to me that Badiou’s Paul book reveals the truth of his position as a whole: a truth necessarily deals with the fable. 222

Only a fable can truly incorporate the unknowable and subversive element of a truth. Any truth without this ‘point of fabulation’ does not fulfil Badiou’s own requirement for being a truth. For Badiou there is only one condition for a truth to be a truth and that is that it is truly universal. 223 Proper universalism is, however, the main stake for Badiou in reading Paul. Paul not only is a thinker

221 Ibid.
222 Ibid.
of universalism, but also the founder of it. Badiou does not mean this as a historical claim, but rather that Paul is one of the first thinkers to truly think universalism in a systematic way. It would be my claim that Paul can think this universalism, precisely because of the fabulous element in the resurrection. Universal truth, being for Badiou an absolute 'for all', excludes no one from it. I would claim that this is only something that can be found in the fable, because only the fable – or the fabulous element in a truth – is truly not an element of any prior law or situation. The fable is precisely that element which can never be accepted in any prior system.

There are, then, in my view no valid reasons to exclude the resurrection from being a proper event. Even if one does not want to accept that the resurrection actually happened – which seems to be Badiou’s stake in his denial that the resurrection was an event – one can still accept that a truth actually stems from it and that the resurrection was an event. Even divorced from its mystical or metaphysical kernel, the truth that stems from the resurrection can be accepted.

After these two remarks about the evental character of the resurrection, the truth of the resurrection can be thematized. The question is, now, what this truth is? About this, Badiou writes:

For the interest of Christ’s resurrection does not lie in itself, as it would in the case of a particular, or miraculous, fact. Its genuine meaning is that it testifies to

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225 In *Logics of Worlds* Badiou expands on the notion of the evental site, that is: that events only happen in a situation which is ready for it. See Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, 363–80. One can wonder whether this does not jeopardize the absolute undeterminability of the event from the perspective of the prior situation. Even accepting that a situation needs to be prepared for an event, an event can by definition never be reducible to the prior situation. It would still need a fabulous element and it might even make the fabulous element all the more important.
the possible victory over death, a death that Paul envisages, as we shall see later
in detail, not in terms of facticity, but in terms of subjective disposition.\textsuperscript{226}

The truth structures the subjects who are faithful to it. These subjects are
beyond death and become, in a certain way, immortal. Death, however, has to
be understood in a radically different way from the conception of physical
death. Before turning to the problem of death in Badiou, the inversion enacted
by the resurrection needs to be thematized.

Badiou notes that the resurrection leads to a new, Christian discourse,
which is a discourse of the new. As we have seen, this happens after every
event. Because an event is not expressible in the logic of the prior situation, it
demands a new language.\textsuperscript{227} In this case it is the language of overcoming death,
which will turn out to entail an inversion of all metaphysical structures. The
resurrection, being an event, breaks into the ontology of the situation and
changes it. Badiou writes:

> The most radical statement in the text we are commenting on is in effect the
> following: “God has chosen the things that are not \textit{[\textit{ta mé onta}] in order to bring
to nought those that are \textit{[\textit{ta onta}].}” That the Christ-event causes non beings
rather than beings to arise as attesting to God; that it \textit{consists in} the abolition of
what \textit{all} previous discourses held as existing, or being, gives a measure of the
ontological subversion to which Paul’s anti philosophy invites the declarant or
militant.\textsuperscript{228}

Badiou emphasizes that the ontological effect the resurrection has is that it
prefers non-being over being. Of course, one has to understand this in terms of
Badiou’s ontology. Being denotes everything there is in a situation, that is,

\textsuperscript{226} Badiou, \textit{Saint Paul}, 45.
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid., 47.
everything that can be subsumed by the state. The statement that God has chosen the ‘things that are not’ has to be understood in this light. The resurrection abolishes both the Jewish and the Greek discourses; it replaces these with a new, Christian discourse.

As we have seen, Heidegger also addresses this transition from \( \text{ta onta} \) to \( \text{ta mē onta} \) in his discussion on how the concept of world has changed for Christian subjectivity. Both Heidegger and Badiou emphasize the fact that this entails an annulment of the importance of the things that the previous discourses – factical life in Heidegger’s terminology – deemed to be important. Interestingly, Heidegger links this to the \( \text{hōs mē} \) and discusses this in an anthropological light. Badiou does not discuss the \( \text{hōs mē} \) passage at all in his work on Paul. Badiou emphasises the ontological shift form \( \text{ta onta} \) to \( \text{ta mē onta} \).

The Christian discourse is a discourse of ‘that which is not’. It is a discourse about things that cannot be taken up by any state. The resurrection instates a radically subversive discourse. Badiou elaborates:

> From a more ontological viewpoint, it is necessary to maintain that Christian discourse legitimates neither the God of wisdom (because God has chosen the foolish things), nor the God of power (because God has chosen the weak and base things). [...] One must, in Paul’s logic, go so far as to say that the Christ-event testifies that God is not the god of Being, is not Being. Paul prescribes an anticipatory critique of what Heidegger calls onto-theology, wherein God is thought as supreme being, and hence as the measure for what being as such is capable of.\(^{229}\)

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\(^{229}\) Ibid., 46–47.
Badiou’s claim that Paul was already a critic of ontotheology is an interesting one. Even though Paul obviously does not use this explicit ontological terminology, there is something to be said for Badiou’s point. The resurrection — being an event — is something outside of any pre-given, ontological order. The logic of the resurrection was nothing, but folly for the Jew and the Greek. The Christian message that the messiah has died to overcome death is one that overturns and inverts the logic of power and wisdom. What was highest — the divine — becomes the lowest. This is an inversion of the Jewish and Greek ontological structures and thereby pulls the highest being into non-being.

This inversion of being and non-being also manifests itself in the subject. The Christian subject, who is formed by being faithful to the resurrection, is structured by this inversion. Although it inverts being and non-being, it is still characterised by both of these conditions. Badiou further claims, by referring to Paul’s paths of the flesh and the spirit, that the subject lives through the structure of the “not ... but”. 230 As becomes clear from the title of the chapter of Saint Paul immediately following these remarks, the “not ... but” should not be understood in a dialectic fashion. 231 It is not a matter of a suspension of one condition in favor of another one. Rather, the condition marked by the “not” and the condition marked by the “but” are equally present in the subject. This is why Badiou claims that the Christian subject is a divided subject. 232

230 Ibid., 63.
231 Badiou rejects the Hegelian, dialectical reading of Paul, because it reduces the death and resurrection to necessary steps in the progression to the absolute. See Ibid., 65–66; For a more detailed discussion of Hegel’s influence on Badiou, see: Justin Clemens, “Had We but Worlds Enough, and Time, This Absolute, Philosopher...” in The Praxis of Alain Badiou, ed. Paul Ashton, A. J. Bartlett, and Justin Clemens (Melbourne: re.press, 2006), 102–45.
232 Badiou, Saint Paul, 55.
About this divided subject, Badiou writes:

For, in reality, one subject is the weaving together of two subjective paths, which Paul names the flesh (sark) and the spirit (pneuma). And the real in turn, insofar as it is in some way “grasped” by the two paths that constitute the subject, can be inflected according to two names: death (thanatos), or life (zoe). Insofar as the real is that which is thought in a subjectivating thought, it will be possible to maintain, according to a difficult, central aphorism, that to gar phronema tes sarkos thanatos, to de phronema tou pneumatos zoe (Rom. 8.6), which, in spite of the difficulty of identifying death as a thought, one must not hesitate to translate as: “The thought of the flesh is death; the thought of the spirit is life.”

Two ‘paths of thinking’, then, divide the subject, both indexed by different concepts. On the one hand, there is what Paul calls the path of the flesh, which is linked to death. On the other hand, there is the path of the spirit, which is linked to life. Badiou further links this division to a number of other concepts. He writes:

There would thus seem to be four concepts coordinating a subject’s fundamental choices: pistis (faith) and ergon (work); kharis (grace) and nomos (law). The subjective path of the flesh (sark), whose real is death, coordinates the pairing of law and works. While the path of the spirit (pneuma), whose real is life, coordinates that of grace and faith.

So, the subject is divided by two paths of thinking. There is the path of flesh, death, law and works, which the subject enacts through the “not” and there is the path of spirit, life, grace and faith, which the subject enacts through the “but”. The term enactment is foreign to Badiou, but I believe that it perfectly portrays Badiou’s point. These two ‘thoughts’ are ways in which life can be

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233 Ibid.
234 Ibid., 75.
lived, which is—as became clear in Heidegger’s reading of Paul—the definition of enactment. Badiou’s Christian subject is divided, because it enacts both of these paths at the same time. In the following I will explain both of these paths to establish Badiou’s conception of subjectivity in Paul.

The first path, which the divided subject enacts through the not, is the path of flesh, which is related to death, law and works. Flesh, as a concept opposed to spirit, should not be understood through a Platonic framework. It is not an opposition between body and soul. Rather, flesh and spirit denote two equal ways of living life. They are the two paths any subject can take.²³⁵

The path of the flesh can best be understood through Badiou’s analysis of law. Law is the totality of principles and regulations that structure and form life as it is lived. In Badiou, the law is that which determines the symbolic order. It does this by denying the existence and even the possibility of the event. It thereby establishes a discourse in which everything can be known and controlled. Through the law the state appropriates ontology, thereby determining what is. Because of this denial of the event and the refusal to accept any real truth outside of the state’s representation of the situation, the law is essentially ideology.²³⁶ The state not only denies the truth stemming from the event, but also establishes itself as the ‘truth’. Badiou tries to overcome this conception of the law and he finds a partner for this in Paul.²³⁷

In Paul, the law is a notoriously difficult topic. For Badiou it is clear, however. Paul is against the law, or at least against the law of both Jew and

²³⁵ Ibid., 56.
The law, according to Badiou’s Paul, can only lead to death. How are the law and death related?

Badiou finds the connection between law and death in sin. About sin Badiou writes:

What is sin exactly? It is not desire as such, for if it were one would not understand its link to the law and death. **Sin is the life of desire as autonomy, as automatism.** The law is required in order to unleash the automatic life of desire, the automatism of repetition. For only the law fixes the object of desire, binding desire to it regardless of the subject’s “will.” It is this objectal automatism of desire, inconceivable without the law, that assigns the subject to the carnal path of death.

Badiou states that the law determines desire by fixing the object of desire with its prohibition. Desire structures the human being in that it mediates its entrance into the symbolic order by its fantasy. A human being can only access the symbolic order through what it lacks and thus desires. Sin, for Badiou, is the mode of life that is driven forward by this desire fixed by the law in an automatic fashion. Combined with the fact that for Badiou the symbolic order is in the first place ontology, it leads to a determinist conception of existence. Life under the law is completely determined by the desires that are fixed by the law. The human being has no freedom and choice in the matter. Sin is life as it is determined by that which one does not want, that is, the unconscious.

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238 Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 76-77.
239 Ibid., 79.
a life marked by necessity. A life of sin is a life that is unable to take action, because sin separates action from thought.  

It is easy to understand how Badiou relates sin and desire to the path of the flesh, but how is death related to this? About this Badiou writes:

Paul’s fundamental thesis is that the law, and only the law, endows desire with an autonomy sufficient for the subject of this desire, from the perspective of that autonomy, to come to occupy the place of the dead.

Through having their desire fixed by the law, the human being becomes like the dead. Badiou does not elaborate this point any further in his book on Paul. In order to understand this, we need to turn to Badiou’s analysis of death in a much later text.

Before moving on to the crux of Badiou’s exposition of the path of flesh – the concept of death – one more remark needs to be made. Up until now, we have seen how the concepts of death, sin, flesh and desire relate, but how do the works of the law fit into this picture? For Badiou, ‘works’ denotes that which is due. You work and you get your pay according to the law. The central concept underlying both works and sin is necessity. It turns out, then, that life under the law is a life of necessity, both legal and biological. This will form a stark opposition with the life of the subject, which will turn out to be marked by a radical contingency.

Now, on to death. What is the concept of death Badiou uses? Badiou starts by renouncing the idea that death is a necessary part of salvation for Paul.

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242 Miller, Badiou, Marion and St Paul: Immanent Grace, 146.
243 Badiou, Saint Paul, 79.
244 Ibid., 81.
Rather, the resurrection shifts the centre of life into life instead of death. Badiou mentions Nietzsche in this regard, but there is actually a different, hidden figure whose ideas of death Badiou breaks here with, namely the Heidegger of *Being and Time*.

In a seminar delivered on May 18, 2015, Badiou explicitly addresses the concept of death. In this seminar, Badiou criticizes the idea of death within a logic of finitude expressed most famously by Heidegger in *Being and Time*. In this seminar Badiou states:

Heidegger's description of death essentially consists of saying that, in man's case, finitude is radically immanent. Death is not something external, indicating a passive finitude or a finitude achieved by human life: rather, human life is commanded or oriented toward death, from within; *Dasein* is 'toward death' from the beginning. To put that another way, the thing proper to man is that the question of death, of finitude, is internal to his existence and to his definition, and not the result of fulfilment or stopping, which are but empirical appearances. For human life, the end is at the beginning. It is an ineluctable component of the prospect of life in itself.

Badiou criticizes the immanentization of death. Badiou refers to Heidegger in this regard and especially to Heidegger's analysis of death in *Being and Time*. As I have shown in the previous chapter, Heidegger's analysis of death shows a strong parallel with his analysis of the *parousia* in Paul. Badiou does not make this connection to Heidegger's text on Paul, but it does shed an interesting light on Badiou's analysis of death. Through the immanentization of death which Badiou criticizes, death becomes an integral part of life in such a way that it is

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245 Ibid., 62.

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both its end and its beginning. In this logic of finitude, death is determinative for life. This is exactly the conception of death that Badiou finds in Paul. It is the figure of life under the law. It is precisely the event that introduces the infinite into finitude.\textsuperscript{247}

Badiou gives an extensive analysis of the concept of death within the logic of finitude. For this chapter, however, I want to discuss two characteristics Badiou mentions, because the Christian subject overcomes both in a very direct way. These characteristics are identity and necessity. About these Badiou states:

Firstly, identity. In the logic of finitude, we only know who someone is when he is dead. Death is the seal that allows us to say what someone is -- otherwise you still do not know what he is capable of. This is a theme that you will find in Greek tragedy. It is death that comes to seal the destiny of individuals' identities but also of peoples' identities: we know of the eighteenth-century fascination for the fall of the Roman empire, which was the point where it was possible to grasp and to consider what the identity of the Roman empire had truly been, in its own being. There is a rather terrifying phrase of Sartre's on this point, that 'to be dead is to be prey to the living'. Death is effectively the moment when you can no longer argue back or plead your cause against the verdict that the living choose to pass on you.\textsuperscript{248}

Death is, then, the basic principle of identity. In the logic of finitude, one's identity can only be truly known after death. In the logic of finitude, the story of one’s life is over at death. A person cannot change anymore after death and their identity can be determined. Badiou continues with the second characteristic:

\textsuperscript{248} Badiou, “Badiou: Down with Death!”
Necessity. Death is the only thing that we are certain of. Everything else is aleatory and variable – ultimately, the pure necessity of human life is crystallised in death. Malraux has Stalin saying (and it’s been questioned that he did), doubtless on a day when he was feeling melancholic, that ‘Ultimately, it’s death that wins’... even if you are a Stalin. This is Stalinist nihilism.249

Death is the only necessity in a finite life. It is a core element in the concept of death. In the seminar, Badiou tries to develop a different conception of death to replace death within the logic of finitude. In Saint Paul, however, Badiou puts death and life in a dichotomical opposition. There is no relation or ambiguity between the terms.250 Rather, death is put clearly on the side of the law and flesh and is as far removed from the concept of life as it can possibly be. The resurrection does not entail a rethinking of death, but rather an absolute overcoming of it. The Christian subject, then, is an immortal subject.251

Now, what does it mean that the Christian subject is outside the reach of death? Obviously, Badiou does not refer to a biological immortality. Rather, death is a thought.252 Or, as Žižek calls it, death is an ‘existential attitude’ towards life.253 How should we understand this radical and disturbing claim that death is a way of life? Welborn argues that even though it is difficult to understand for a contemporary audience, it might not have been so disturbing for Paul and his audience.254 Welborn argues that for Roman culture death had an entirely different meaning than for our contemporary culture. This can also be said of the Jewish and Greek ways of thinking, especially those that lived

249 Ibid.
251 Badiou, Saint Paul, 66.
252 Ibid., 55.
253 Žižek, The Ticklish Subject, 146.
under the influence of the Roman empire. In a Roman culture, death meant in the first place exile or isolation from society. Worse than a biological death was being stripped of your identity and environment.\(^\text{255}\) A Roman life, then, coincided with its status in Roman society. A life in exile would, then, be a life according to the path of death.

This path of the flesh is one of the two paths through which the subject lives. The subject lives this, however, through the "not". Badiou’s formulation of the "not ... but" seems highly reminiscent of Heidegger’s \( h\ddot{o}s \, m\ddot{e} \), however there is a key difference. Where the \( h\ddot{o}s \, m\ddot{e} \) enacts conditions through their own negation, the "not ... but" lives a Christian life while simultaneously being dragged down by that which it is not. The path of the flesh is still present in every subject as that what it does not want.\(^\text{256}\) Where the \( h\ddot{o}s \, m\ddot{e} \) denotes a tension between a condition and its own negation, the "not ... but" is a tension between a life structured by the law of desire, but simultaneously freed from it by the resurrection.

Opposed to the path of the flesh, which the Christian subject does not want to live, is the path of the spirit. The path of the spirit is marked by life, faith and grace. The concept of life is a simple one in that it is the opposite of death. Death is a life ruled by sin. This is a life in which one cannot freely act, because one is driven by desire. Life, on the other hand, is a life in which thinking and action are one.\(^\text{257}\) This life can act without being hindered by sin. Badiou finds this in Paul’s concept of salvation. A saved life is a life that is not enslaved to desire.

\(^\text{255}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{256}\) Badiou, \textit{Saint Paul}, 73.
\(^\text{257}\) Ibid., 84.
The pivotal concept in the path of the spirit is, unsurprisingly, the resurrection. The resurrection overcomes the law by its conquering of death. The logic of death is no longer valid. This is the meaning of the resurrection. Badiou interprets the Pauline register against his reading of the resurrection as an event. So, grace becomes the fact that the event is contingent. The event does not follow the law, nor is it dependent on the law. Faith, in its turn, becomes conviction. It is the subject's belief that the event has happened and instated a truth. The path of life, then, is a life that has overcome the law and its logic of death. This is, as we have seen, salvation.

The effects of the truth of the resurrection—which has made salvation possible—can, however, only be known through the subject who is faithful to it. Even though an event has happened, its effects can only be measured through subjective activity. Now then, how does this overcoming of the law influence the Christian subject who is ‘the local configuration’ of this truth? What is the shape of the subject following the path of the spirit?

I have mentioned the resurrection’s overcoming of the law a number of times. This does not, however, mean that the truth of the event leads to anarchism. Rather, the stale, solidified law of the Jew and the Greek, the law that institutionalizes the logic of death, is replaced by a different law. In a similar vein to Agamben’s replacement of law with a more primordial law—as

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258 Ibid., 45.
259 Ibid., 77.
260 Brown, “{Ø,S}\in\{S\}? Or, Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, Waiting for Something to Happen,” 293.
261 Badiou, Saint Paul, 14.
will become clear in the next chapter – Badiou finds a replacement of the law of death with the law of life in Paul. This law of life is a non-law. \(^{262}\)

Why does Badiou need this non-literal law, which I have termed, with Bosteels, non-law? About this Badiou writes:

The real of faith is an effective declaration, which, with the word “resurrection,” utters that life and death are not ineluctably distributed as they are in the “old man.” Faith publicly acknowledges that the subjective apparatus commanded by the law is not the only possible one. But it becomes apparent that faith, confessing the resurrection of one man, merely declares a possibility for everyone. That a new assemblage of life and death is possible is borne out by resurrection, and this is what must first be declared. But this conviction leaves the universalization of the “new man” in suspense and says nothing as to the content of the reconciliation between living thought and action. Faith says: We can escape powerlessness and rediscover that from which the law separated us. Faith prescribes a new possibility, one that, although real in Christ, is not, as yet, in effect for everyone. \(^{263}\)

The resurrection and the faith through which the subject is constituted merely declare the possibility of overcoming the law of death. The entire structure of event, truth and the faithful subject designates the formal conditions of possibility of a new existence and a different subjectivity. To actually effect this change, one needs a new law to replace the law that has been overcome. Only a law can elevate the contingent possibility of a new subjectivity to an actuality. Because this law has to avoid the pitfalls of the old law and its rigid designation, it must be a non-literal law. \(^{264}\) Love is the name for this non-literal law that liberates the subject from the compulsion of the old law. \(^{265}\)

\(^{262}\) Bosteels, “Force of Nonlaw: Alain Badiou’s Theory of Justice,” 1907.

\(^{263}\) Badiou, Saint Paul, 88.

\(^{264}\) Hallward, Badiou: A Subject To Truth, 87.
Now, the question is: what is the form of this subject that is divided between the path of the flesh and the path of the spirit? The subject is divided through a "not ... but". It tries not to live according to the flesh, although its unconscious desires are still structured by it. Rather, it tries to live according to the spirit. This means it tries to overcome the law of death and finitude and become an infinite subject.²⁶⁶ A subject who follows this path of the spirit tries to overcome the law and its two characteristics, identity and necessity. The Christian subject, then, is marked by non-identity and contingency.

Firstly, here we stumble upon a most crucial aspect of my analysis, namely that the Christian subject is not determined by its identity. Badiou emphasizes Paul’s universal logic and especially the fact that identity no longer counts. Because the event happens completely independent from any prior ontology or identity, the subject that follows from it is unstructured by any existing identity. Every identity is dissolved into the universal by the event.²⁶⁷ Just like the resurrection affirms the weak over the strong and non-being over being, the subject stemming from it is a subject of non-identity.

Secondly, because the subject as subject comes into existence after the event and is not just transformed by it, there are no necessary qualifications for it.²⁶⁸ The subject, then, comes into existence from nothing. There is no prior condition that is necessary for the emergence of the subject, except the event. The subject completely depends on the event. Because the event was

²⁶⁷ Badiou, Saint Paul, 110.
completely incalculable, so is the subject.\textsuperscript{269} This is the contingency of the subject; its appearance is wholly unnecessary. The consequence of this is that the Christian subject can never be subsumed under any existing, literal law. The Christian subject is, ironically, necessarily illegal and subversive through its contingency.

Through a reading of Paul, Badiou discovers a Christian subject, which—by overcoming the law of death—is radically contingent and lacks any pre-given identity. In the following I want to consider how this conception of the subject affects the three principal themes of temporality, world, and community. Even though Badiou says remarkably little about both time and the world, it is still worthwhile to look at these concepts. It is still worthwhile to look at these concepts, as we shall see in the following sections.

\section*{2.5. Temporality}

The concept of temporality occurs in two ways in Badiou’s work. In both of these ways temporality is linked to the event. Firstly, there is temporality in the sense of history. Time is understood as the succession of different eras. Badiou reinterprets history in such a way that it denotes the time after an event. Only an event can make history.\textsuperscript{270} What we call history in our everyday language, Badiou calls nature. Nature, in Badiou’s sense, is an era that is subjugated to the state and happens according to the law.\textsuperscript{271} This first occurrence of

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{269} Marchart, \textit{Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau}, 125.
\item \textsuperscript{270} Meillassoux, “History and Event in Alain Badiou,” 1.
\item \textsuperscript{271} Barker, \textit{Alain Badiou: A Critical Introduction}, 76.
\end{itemize}
temporality, while interesting and definitely related to Badiou’s engagement with Paul, is not the form of temporality that characterizes the subject.²⁷²

The second form of temporality present in the work of Badiou is the temporality of the subject. In *Saint Paul*, the discussion of temporality occurs in Badiou’s reinterpretation of hope. About hope, Badiou writes:

> Against this classic judicial eschatology, Paul seems instead to characterize hope as a simple imperative of continuation, a principle of tenacity, of obstinacy. In Thessalonians I, faith is compared to striving (*ergon*), and love to gruelling work, to the laborious, the troublesome. Hope, for its part, pertains to endurance, to perseverance, to patience; it is the subjectivity proper to the continuation of the subjective process.²⁷³

Instead of the classical idea of hope as hope in the Last Judgment and the world which is to come, Badiou sees hope in Paul as the perseverance of the truth of the event. So, hope is not an expectation of a future event or future state of affairs, but rather the wish for the effects of the resurrection to continue. In this sense, it is closer to the idea of a realized eschatology, than to what Badiou calls the classical, judicial eschatology.²⁷⁴

In *Saint Paul*, Badiou hardly says anything more than this about hope and temporality. A question Badiou completely skips over is, strangely enough,


²⁷³ Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 93.

²⁷⁴ Realised eschatology is the idea that the Kingdom of God is not something that will come at the end of times, but that the “final things” have already happened. In this sense, it is an eschatology which has already happened. See C. H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, Revised Edition (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1961).
the question of the role the subject can play in enforcing the future. In Being and Event, Badiou devotes part VII to the explanation of the mathematical operation of forcing. Forcing denotes for Badiou precisely that operation through which the subject can ‘force’ the event to will have been present in the situation. The strange formulation of ‘will have been present’ denotes the future anterior, which will turn out to be the temporality of the subject who is faithful to the event. I will explain these two difficult concepts related to the temporality of the subject by applying them to Badiou’s reading of the Christian subject in Paul.

The operation of forcing is an interaction between the subject, the event and temporality. In Saint Paul, Badiou makes only one remark about this topic. At the very beginning of his book, Badiou states that the Christian subject does not pre-exist the event it declares. On the other hand, the subject does have to do the work of the event. It has to declare the event and bring it into the present situation.

The event – and this is another point that Badiou addresses in Being and Event, but not in Saint Paul – has a certain orientation towards the future. As we have seen, the event is radically contingent. This also means that it has no set conclusion. It is not the self-unfolding of history. Rather, the event and its consequences happen by chance. A subject who is faithful to an event, however, wants the effects of the truth of the event to manifest itself. It wants the event to have been true and it acts accordingly. It will therefore try to

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275 See Badiou, Being and Event, 391–440.
276 Feltham, Alain Badiou: Live Theory, 111.
277 For an exposition of the concept of the future anterior in continental philosophy, see: Biebl and Porischlegel, Paulus-Lektüren, 57.
278 Badiou, Saint Paul, 14.
279 Ibid., 60.
achieve a future fulfilment of the event that it is: it will try to achieve a situation in which the event is present. The subject does this through forcing.  

Paul’s foundation of the Church is an excellent example of this. After the resurrection Paul invents an entirely new language of faith, salvation, charity and sacrifice to refer to a world that has been completely changed by the event. Paul starts talking about the world as if the effects of the truth, which Paul wants to implement in the world, have already taken place. This is the having been true of the future anterior. Paul treats the world as already being fully effected by the effects of the truth he is trying to make manifest by his declaration. Paul ‘forces’ the effects of the truth into the present, so that they will have been true in the future. Through this operation the subject does the work of the event.

This leads to a remarkable form of temporality for the Christian subject. As O’Sullivan notes:

> Put simply, the subject is a knot of sorts between the present within which it is situated and a future to come (that in fact the subject will have contributed to bringing about). Or, put another way, the subject — in its function of forcing — is a fragment of a future hurled back in order to bring that future into being. Forcing, we might say, is a peculiar future orientation within the present; a technology of prophecy.

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281 Badiou, Being and Event, 397.
To this tying up of the present and the future in the subject, one can add that it is the truth of a past event, which is being forced into the present through the future. Where the nexus of temporality of the Christian subject was the future for Heidegger, it is the present for Badiou. In the present both the past and the future are present through the work of the event of the subject.

2.6. World

The second of the three contours of the Christian subject is the way the subject interacts with the world. At the time when Badiou was writing *Saint Paul*, the concept of the world was the furthest thing from his mind. Indeed, in Badiou’s *pre-Logics of Worlds* works, we find him explicitly ignoring many ‘Heideggerian’ themes in philosophy, such as history and world. *Logics of Worlds* seems to counteract this deficiency. As I have stated in the introduction, however, I understand world as the relationship Pauline subjectivity has to the world in which it lives. World, in the sense of this dissertation, can be found in Badiou’s reading of Paul in what he calls the situation and then specifically the situation within the context of the Greek and Jewish discourses.

I have already established that for Badiou situation is a term he uses for a specific set in a concrete context. In other words, we are always embedded in a situation that is defined by the elements surrounding us. I am, for example, in my living room with a plant, a couch and the computer I am writing this on. This is the situation in which one immediately is.

In Badiou’s reading of Paul, he also develops a broader notion of situation, even though he does not make any explicit distinction between different concepts of ‘world’. In the discussion of the discourses, Badiou explains that for Paul the world consists of two intellectual figures, the Jew and the Greek. These two are competing ways of understanding situations. Both,
however, are figures of mastery. They do not accept any entity that cannot be understood in terms of the situation. In this broader sense, situation denotes Paul’s entire life world and his relation to it. Through the resurrection the logic of the Jew and the Greek is replaced with the Christian discourse. This replacement also affects how Pauline subjectivity relates itself to any situation and thus to the world.

The resurrection replaces the Jewish and Greek laws of death with the non-literal law of life in love. Love becomes the new law of the situation the resurrection enters into and as such the law of the world. What does this law entail? First of all, it has to be noted that the main effect of any truth is a paradigm shift. A truth of the event entering into a world opens a new way of thinking.

The Greek and the Jewish discourse give a primacy to power and being. Their view of the world is the world which is structured by an all-powerful and all-knowing entity – God for the Jew, wisdom for the Greek – which gives to each their own. Everything is assigned a proper place in the world. In Badiou’s ontological terminology, this means everything there is, is subsumed by the state of the situation. In this view, the world is an ordered and non-contingent place, where the human being only has to attain its rightful place.

Opposed to this is the Christian subject and its discourse. Badiou writes:

For Paul, the Christ-event, which shears and undoes the cosmic totality, is precisely what indicates the vanity of places. The real is attested to rather as the

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286 Badiou, Saint Paul, 56.
refuse from every place, there where the subject rehearses his weakness: “We have become, and are now, as the refuse of the world, the offscouring of all things” (I Cor 4:13). One must therefore assume the subjectivity of refuse, and it is in the face of this abasement that the object of Christian discourse suddenly appears.287

The resurrection undoes the order of the world. It inverts and thereby overcomes traditional ideas of power and being. No place has been a priori assigned to anything or anyone, because necessity itself is overcome through the non-literal law of the spirit. The logic of places has to make room for the non-place.

Now, how does the Christian subject relate to this world? As we have seen, the subject is divided between death and life. In this context, the division becomes apparent. The subject is divided by the law of the old world, which still exists in the state, and the law of the new world, which it needs to establish itself. The state, which does not and cannot accept the event, tries to re-incorporate the subject into it by binding the subject’s desire with the law. The Christian subject, through the path of the spirit, has to avoid being subsumed by the state. It does this by accepting its status as ‘refuse of the world’, as Badiou repeats Paul’s terminology. It does lay claim to any pre-given place in the world. Rather, the Christian subject, in its forcing activity, should already treat the world as having overcome the necessity of places and the logic of death, even though the state does not accept or reflect this yet. In this way the Christian lives between the event and the world.288 It dwells in its non-belonging to the world.

287 Ibid.
288 O’Sullivan, “The Strange Temporality of the Subject: Badiou and Deleuze between the Finite and the Infinite,” 164.
2.7. Community

After these long considerations of the account of subjectivity, it is time to move on to the question that for Badiou is pivotal in his reading of Saint Paul, namely the question of universalism. I will read and interpret this concept in terms of community, because – as I will show – universalism demands of the subjects that they do the work of the truth. Doing this works establishes a community.

Universalism is, for Badiou, an aspect of the truth. The truth is universal. This means that it has to be open and available for all. There can be no qualifications, such as having a certain identity, which are necessary to belong to it. Rather, one can belong to the truth by becoming a subject to it. Essentially, Badiou’s conception of universality is simply a for all. As such, the truth overrides any and all forms of community that are based on a shared identity. Belonging to a group can no longer be based on any identity markers.

Paul expresses this most powerfully when he addresses the problem of circumcision. Paul stresses that circumcision is not a necessary condition to become a Christian subject. As we have seen in the discussion of the Jewish and Greek discourses, both claim to be truly universal. Badiou, however, argues that they are actually particular, because they both exclude people from belonging. The Christian discourse is universal. It is universal, because it breaks with every form of pre-given identity. Furthermore, it also does not instate a new identity. Rather, it overcomes the idea of identity as such. The

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289 Badiou, Saint Paul, 22.
Christian subject, then, is a subject of non-identity, non-being and non-belonging.

Now, the question is: what happens to the identity that was already present in the human being when it became a subject? We have seen in Heidegger’s characterization of the *hōs mē* that becoming a Christian does not annul factical conditions, such as identity. How is this in Badiou? Badiou writes:

> That hope is the pure patience of the subject, the inclusion of self in the universality of the address, in no way implies that differences should be ignored or dismissed. For although it is true, so far as what the event constitutes is concerned, that there is “neither Greek nor Jew,” *the fact is* that there are Greeks and Jews. That every truth procedure collapses differences, infinitely deploying a purely generic multiplicity, does not permit us to lose sight of the fact that, in the situation (call it: the world), *there are differences.* One can even maintain that there is nothing else.²⁹¹

Badiou, then, understands that one cannot ignore the differences which are present in the world, simply because they have been overcome by the resurrection. There are, as Badiou says, Jews and Greeks. How should one account for that?

Badiou discusses multiple passages in which Paul discusses differences. Badiou finds the same move in Paul every time. When the Christians, however, end up in petty squabbles about particularities, Paul reprimands them for forgetting their universal task. Insofar as differences do not interfere with the universal work of truth, he lets them be and he recognizes that the universal work of truth can only be done in a particular world by

²⁹¹ Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 98.
subjects who are divided by a universal path of the spirit and a particular path of the flesh. Paul understands that the universal has to be made manifest through a particular identity.

We have, then, divided subjects between a universal non-law and a particular law. In so far, as these subjects still live according to a particular law, they are separated from each other. In their universality, however, they form a universal community of the spirit.\(^{292}\) This community is, like the individual subjects, divided in that the subjects are united in their universality, but at the same time separated by their particularity.

This community has to be formed through the universal aspect that unites. The question is, however, how one can form a community without taking recourse to a common identity or even to a commonality of being. Badiou finds a solution for this in 1 Corinthians 3:9. He writes:

The most powerful expression of this equality, necessary correlate of this universality, can be found in Corinthians 1.3.9. We are all \textit{theou sunergoi}, God’s co-workers. This is a magnificent maxim. Where the figure of the master breaks down come those of the worker and of equality, conjoined. All equality is that of belonging together to a work. Indubitably, those participating in a truth procedure are co-workers in its becoming. This is what the metaphor of the son designates: a son is he whom an event relieves of the law and everything related to it for the benefit of a shared egalitarian endeavour.\(^{293}\)

The communality of the universal community is located in the work. It is a community, because all members declare the same event and do its work. The Christian subjects are God’s co-workers in that they force the effects of the

\(^{292}\) Brown, "\{\empty,\mathcal{S}\}\subseteq\{\$\}?: Or, Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, Waiting for Something to Happen," 294.

\(^{293}\) Badiou, \textit{Saint Paul}, 60.
resurrection into the present world. Through this work, they rise beyond their identitarian customs.\textsuperscript{294} In doing so, the Christian subjects form a community that is subversive to every past, present and future state, because it has no identity or being to be subsumed by a state.

2.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at the philosophical reading of Paul by a second author, Alain Badiou. Again, the question was: what is the new subjectivity Badiou finds in Paul and how does this affect temporality, world and community? Badiou reads Paul as a militant poet-thinker of the event. The event is, for Badiou, an occurrence that interrupts the ontological order of things. An event establishes a universal truth, which can structure subjects by their being faithful to it. The event is unknowable and ungraspable by any prior situation and is as such necessarily subversive. So, in Paul, Badiou finds a person who opens the possibility of thinking the radically new opposed to every law of the state.

The question of subjectivity is, then, a central question in Badiou’s oeuvre. Badiou finds a powerful expression of subjectivity in Paul. Even though Badiou states that Paul only gives a formal account of subjectivity, I have argued that Paul actually gives a full account of subjectivity, both in form and content.

According to Badiou, Paul lived in a world characterized by two figures: the Jew and the Greek. Both of these figures have the law, albeit their own law, as the structuring principle of the world. In this world, the event – which for Paul is the resurrection of Christ – happens. The resurrection breaks


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Badiou finds Paul’s thought to be structured on the opposition of two ways of thinking, which are actually ways of living life: life and death. Paul calls these two ways the paths of the flesh and the spirit. The path of the flesh connects death, sin, desire and law. Badiou exposes the law as the instance that binds the object of desire through the law. Following the path in which life is controlled by the logic of desire is what Paul calls sin. This sinful life is death, because it binds the human being to its own identity and the necessity of the law of desire.

The path of the spirit, on the other hand, is opened up by the resurrection. It is a victory over death and the path of the flesh associated with it. The path of the spirit connects life, grace and faith. It is a salvation from the sinful life of desire. The resurrection has instated a universal truth that no one has to live according to the logic of death. The path of the spirit, then, is marked by non-identity and contingency.

Interestingly enough, the Christian subject – the subject who is faithful to the resurrection – is not fully of the path of the spirit. Rather, the Christian subject is a subject who is internally divided between the paths of the spirit and of the flesh. It lives these paths through the “not ... but”. It tries to avoid living through the path of the flesh and it wants to live according to the spirit. The state, however, cannot accept this and tries to force the subject into the path of the flesh through binding its desire with the law. The Christian subject, then, is a subject who has to struggle to maintain its non-identity and its contingency against the law.

Becoming a Christian subject entails a transformation in the way temporality, the world and community are understood and lived. Although
Badiou makes very few explicit remarks about these three concepts, I have tried to show how Badiou interprets these concepts and how the temporality, understanding of the world and the community of the Christian subject are inherently bound up with its being a subject. The resurrection has happened in the past, but work needs to be done to ensure that its truth takes effect. The subject has an expectation of a world in which the resurrection has already taken effect. Through its own activity, it needs to force this world to come to existence. The subject, then, is a temporal nexus of a past event and its future realization in the present.

The Christian subject, being divided between the two paths, also experiences the world through this division. On the one hand, it still lives in a world where the law of the old situation is valid. It tries to dislocate this law, however, by inverting the logic of the world. The subject becomes the waste of the world. It dwells in a world to which it does not belong and tries to force the world to become a world filled by the resurrection.

Through the non-identity and non-belonging the Christian subject forms a community with the other subjects of the resurrection. They form a community based neither on any identity, nor even on being, but only on the communal work they have to do. All subjects are tasked with bringing the future fulfilment of the event into the present. Even though they are all different in their worldly, legal identity, they form an illegal community in which difference is subservient to the universal work of the resurrection.

In this chapter we have seen how Badiou discovers a form of subjectivity in Paul defined by its division between life and death. The subject does the illegal work of the resurrection in overcoming the law. In the following chapter we will consider Agamben’s exposition of Pauline subjectivity.
Chapter 3: Agamben. The potentiality of subjectivity

3.1. Introduction

The last philosophical intervention with Saint Paul that I will consider in this dissertation is Giorgio Agamben’s *The Time That Remains*. In this book published in 2000, Agamben gives a reading of Paul’s letter to the Romans, but, as it will turn out, Agamben does more than explain just this letter. Firstly, even though Agamben comments on the first ten words of the letter to the Romans, his reading of Paul is also heavily indebted to Paul’s other letters. Secondly, similarly to what was the case with Badiou, for Agamben his book on Paul has to be situated in the context of his own philosophical oeuvre.

Agamben’s oeuvre is a strange, but vast one. Arguably his main work is the 9-part *Homo Sacer* series. Next to writing these nine volumes,

Agamben has written a multitude of other books, which usually address a similar theme as the *Homo Sacer* series. In all of these books, Agamben addresses the same problem, namely the problem of life in relation to the law. Contemporary politics, which Agamben—following Foucault—terms biopolitics, relates to life precisely in that it reduces it to a bare life, which is subjugated to the violence of the sovereign, who decides upon the law. This negative evaluation of contemporary politics has led many commentators to accuse Agamben of being a political nihilist. What these commentators fail

enormous tempo. Furthermore, very recently Agamben changed the order of the series. He shifted *The Kingdom and the Glory* from II, 2 into the vacant spot of II, 4 and he wrote *Stasis* as the new II, 2.


to see, however, is that Agamben is continually trying – with varying success – to rethink politics in a new way. Agamben attempts to do this, however, not through political philosophy or political theology, but through political ontology. That is, Agamben’s re-thinking of politics is grounded in a renewal of ontology and his oeuvre largely deals with ontological problems.

The scholarship on Agamben can be divided into four groups. Firstly, because Agamben is a living and relatively ‘new’ philosopher, there is – similar to Badiou scholarship – a growing group of introductions to Agamben. These are general introductions to Agamben for a specific discipline.


Secondly, there is the group of commentaries on either one—or multiple—of Agamben’s books or on a certain specific topic in his work. Many of these commentaries are collections of essays or special issues of journals.\(^\text{302}\) Thirdly, there is a group of scholars who focus on the political aspects of Agamben’s thought. These scholars tend to read Agamben, either positively or negatively, as political thinker or political philosopher.\(^\text{303}\) Finally, there is a part of scholarship that focuses on Agamben’s relationship to other thinkers. Agamben is an erudite philosopher who uses many different thinkers in his work. By his

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\(^{\text{302}}\) This group includes a number of collections, such as: Matthew Calarco and Steven DeCaroli, eds., *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); Justin Clemens, Nicholas Heron, and Alex Murray, eds., *The Work of Giorgio Agamben. Law, Literature, Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008); Tom Frost, ed., *Giorgio Agamben. Legal, Political and Philosophical Perspectives* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 2013); Andrew Norris, ed., *Politics, Metaphysics, and Death: Essays on Giorgio Agamben’s Homo Sacer* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); It also contains a number of journal issues dedicated to Agamben, such as The South Atlantic Quarterly 107:1, Epoché 16.1 and Theory and Event 13.1 and some separate engagements with Agamben, such as Jacques Derrida, *The Beast & the Sovereign*, ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Ginette Michaud, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009); van der Heiden, *Ontology after Ontotheology: Plurality, Event, and Contingency in Contemporary Philosophy*. It also contains a number of journal issues dedicated to Agamben, such as The South Atlantic Quarterly 107:1, Epoché 16.1 and Theory and Event 13.1.

own admission he is heavily influenced by Heidegger, Foucault and Arendt, but his work relates to the work of many others among whom Nietzsche, Derrida, Schmitt, Benjamin and Aristotle. Add to this the fact that Agamben is part of and heavily in discussion with a large 'generation' of thinkers who engage with the political, such as Žižek, Badiou, Nancy and Negri and Hardt, and it is understandable why there are so many publications about Agamben in relation to other philosophers.

This dissertation is part of both the second and the fourth group. This chapter is a commentary on *The Time That Remains*, but it is framed within a dissertation in which Agamben is related to Heidegger and Badiou. There are, however, two caveats. Firstly, even though it is my intention to, in the first place, do justice to Agamben’s reading of Paul on its own terms, I am not interested in clarifying Agamben for the sake of Agamben. Rather, I want to discover the potential of Pauline subjectivity and I use Agamben in that endeavor. Secondly, I do not read Agamben’s *The Time That Remains* as one of the many books in his oeuvre, but rather as the centerpiece of it. As I have mentioned, Agamben addresses the same problem in most of his books.

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Time That Remains, however, Paul allows Agamben to refound ontology and thereby rethink politics. In this chapter I will make exactly this point.

In this chapter I will begin by addressing the questions of why and how Agamben reads Paul. (3.2) Next, I will again discuss ‘methodology’. In Agamben’s case, this will entail a further elucidation of the problem of life and law and the Pauline ‘solution’ to this in the messianic. (3.3) Thereafter, I will look at the figure of subjectivity that Agamben discovers in Paul and how this subjectivity is a solution to the problem of the law. (3.4) Finally, I will look at the consequences of this subjectivity for the three concepts of temporality (3.5), world (3.6) and community (3.7). After this short introduction, I will move on to the second part of this chapter: Agamben’s Paul.

3.2. Paul

Agamben begins The Time That Remains by giving a characterisation of Paul’s letters and, at the same time, a characterisation of how he will approach Paul:

First and foremost, this seminar proposes to restore Paul’s Letters to the status of the fundamental messianic text for the Western tradition.

Agamben continues by noting that the history of interpretation of the Pauline letters by the Christian church has cancelled out the basic messianic meaning of these texts. Agamben aims to restore this meaning.

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305 One of the other “figures” that allows Agamben to do this is the Franciscan Order. See Agamben, The Highest Poverty. Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life; for an elaboration of this point, see Lorenzo Chiesa, “Giorgio Agamben’s Franciscan Ontology,” Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy 5, no. 1 (2009): 105–16.

306 Agamben, The Time That Remains, 1.
There are a number of things to note about this characterization of Paul as a messianic thinker. Firstly, the term ‘messianic’ is not a part of Paul’s own vocabulary. Rather, it is a term Agamben reads into Paul based on Agamben’s philosophical interests. This is not to say, however, that ‘messianic’ is not an adequate adjective describing Paul’s project.

Secondly, the problem with Agamben’s very first sentence is that it is not clear what ‘the messianic’ is exactly. One would expect that Agamben gives a further explanation, however he does not. Agamben states that to understand Paul’s texts as messianic texts, we first need to understand what ‘the time of the now’, the specifically messianic temporality entails. The only explanation Agamben gives of the messianic is by referring it to its temporality. In section 3.6 I will address this problem.

Finally, by emphasizing the ‘messianic’ nature of Paul’s letters, Agamben reads Paul against a group of ‘contemporary’ thinkers, such as Derrida, Benjamin and Taubes, who expressly engage in re-thinking life in relation to the political order. In this Jewish-inspired, philosophical tradition, the messiah is a figure who enters this world and radically changes it. The messiah is an overcoming of the current political order. Even before giving a further definition of the concept of ‘messianic’ in Agamben’s work, it is clear that Agamben’s Paul is a political thinker.

Now, the questions are: why does Agamben read Paul and which Paul does he read? I will address the latter question first and in doing so also answer the first question. Agamben’s main focus is on the first ten words of Romans, but he explains these by using a multitude of Pauline texts, next to other sources. Agamben uses 11 of the 13 New Testament letters that are attributed

307 Ibid., 2.
to Paul. The only letters that Agamben does not use are 2 Timothy and Philemon. This use of non-Paul authored epistles alongside the genuine ones leads Roland Boer to criticize Agamben. Boer writes:

The worst case is his search for a historical Paul and his thought. In doing so, he uses the pseudo-Pauline epistles along with the genuine ones. That is, out of the eleven letters to which he refers (there are thirteen in total) four are not written by Paul but by someone else under the name of Paul. Now, this would not be a problem if he were concerned only with ‘Paul’s letters’, as he claims. Indeed, the Paul of these letters, who we might call the Church’s Paul, the one of all thirteen letters, has been far more influential in theology, philosophy and culture than the scholarly Paul of the seven genuine letters. A problem does arise, however, with Agamben’s search for a real, flesh-and-blood Paul to whom he can attribute these thoughts. It is, at best, somewhat capricious and mischievous to use four of the pseudo-Pauline epistles as a way into the thought of Paul.

Boer, who has written a number of excellent books and articles on both Agamben and Badiou’s engagements with Paul, misses the mark here. He criticizes Agamben for using non-Pauline sources in his quest to elucidate the historical Paul. Nowhere, however, does Agamben explicitly state his intention to read the historical Paul. Rather, on the very first page of The Time That Remains Agamben claims to be interested in the Pauline letters and the figure to whom all these letters are attributed. In a starker contrast to Heidegger and Badiou, Agamben actively engages with the entirety of the oeuvre which has traditionally been attributed to Paul and not just the letters which historical-

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308 If one includes Hebrews in the collection of ‘Pauline’ letters, then the score becomes 12 out of 14.
309 Boer, Criticism of Religion. On Marxism and Theology, II, 184.
310 Agamben, The Time That Remains, 1.
critical exegesis have determined to have been written by Paul. Boer misses this point completely.

Interestingly enough, Boer remarks that this would not be a problem if Agamben was interested in the far more influential Paul, namely the Paul who the Church attributed all the Pauline letters to. As I have argued above, this is precisely the Paul that Agamben is interested in. The Church’s Paul is the author of all the letters and, in being that, the foundation of the Church and a large part of western intellectual history. It is my contention that this is precisely the Paul that Agamben is interested in. He is interested in the Paul to whom fourteen letters are attributed, precisely because it is this Paul, and not just the historical Paul as Badiou claims, who will turn out to be a radical political thinker. It is this Paul, the figure who ‘founded’ the Church, which Agamben reinterprets as a messianic thinker, from whom one can derive a criticism on the Church.

As I have noted, Agamben’s engagement with Paul is mediated through Agamben’s attempt to rethink the political and ontological foundation of Western society. If one understands Agamben’s reading of Paul in that light, one has to take Agamben’s claim seriously that he wants “to restore Paul's Letters to the status of the fundamental messianic text for the Western tradition”.

The verb ‘to restore’ shows that for Agamben Paul’s letters are fundamental texts for the Western tradition and that we need to reread those texts through their messianic meaning. Agamben’s engagement with Paul, then, is an attempt to reground Western politics through a reinterpretation of one of its foundational thinkers.

\[311\] Ibid.
3.3. Philosophical background

In the following, I want to consider Agamben’s project insofar as it is relevant for his reading of Paul. I have already mentioned how Agamben’s philosophy in general is concerned with the relationship between life and law within our contemporary, bio-political framework. Essentially all of Agamben’s works are interventions in this problem. Not every theme he addresses, however, is equally relevant for his reading of Paul. For that reason, I will not discuss every concept Agamben discusses in his vast oeuvre, but only the ones which are relevant for understanding Agamben’s reading of Paul and relating this reading to the works of Heidegger and Badiou. Similarly, Agamben’s reading of Paul does not refer to biopolitics, so one can fully understand Agamben’s project and his reading of Paul without an explicit discussion of biopolitics. Rather, I will give a partial, but consistent reading of Agamben’s project. So, even though I will not discuss certain concepts which Agamben devotes numerous books to, I will still give an elaboration of Agamben’s project with *The Time That Remains* as its nexus. 312

For Agamben, philosophy is always a confrontation with the law. 313 The law is, like many notions Agamben uses, a complex and ambiguous concept. One would misunderstand Agamben, however, when law is


interpreted as just positive law. Positive law is the totality of rules and regulations which are valid within a certain system. Agamben’s analysis of the law certainly affects positive law, but it is not his main concern. Rather, he is interested in the law in a more fundamental sense. To do this, Agamben analyses the exception.314

The exception plays a role in legal theory in the form of the state of exception. The state of exception is the point at which the legal order is suspended. If the need arises, a governing body can temporarily suspend the law, when they need to act quickly for the greater good. When there is a flood, for example, a government can build a dyke on someone’s land without permission. The rights of the owner of the land on which the dyke has to be built are suspended for the greater good.

The great theorist of the exception – whose work is a big influence on Agamben – is Carl Schmitt.315 The state of exception is, for Schmitt, the point at which law becomes unformulatable.316 The letter of the law is suspended. The figure who can suspend the law is the sovereign as Schmitt notes in Political Theology.317 The state of exception is a situation in which the sovereign – in the interest of some kind of greater good – can suspend the law and instate a rule that opposes the usual law. What interests Agamben in this regard is not the historical occurrences of the state of exception.318 Rather, he is

317 Ibid., 5.
interested in the structure of the exception through which the sovereign has an absolute control over the law. This is why, for Agamben, one of the prime examples of a state of exception is not an actual state of exception, namely the USA Patriot Act. What happens in this legal 'state of exception' is that the basic rights of people are subjugated to the whim of the sovereign or his proxy. Agamben writes:

What is new about President Bush's order is that it radically erases any legal status of the individual, thus producing a legally unnamable and unclassifiable being. Not only do the Taliban captured in Afghanistan not enjoy the status of POWs as defined by the Geneva Convention, they do not even have the status of persons charged with a crime according to American laws. Neither prisoners nor persons accused, but simply "detainees," they are the object of a pure de facto rule, of a detention that is indefinite not only in the temporal sense but in its very nature as well, since it is entirely removed from the law and from judicial oversight.

For Agamben, the problem with the state of exception, whether it is 'legal' or not, is twofold. Firstly, Agamben claims – following Benjamin – that the exception is no longer the exception, but the rule. The exception has become

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319 Agamben is often criticised for his focus on the state of exception as the paradigm for politics. See for example: Bonnie Honig, *Emergency Politics. Paradox, Law, Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); The point for Agamben, however, is not the state of exception itself, but rather the "historical-problematic context" it indicates. See Agamben, *The Signature of All Things. On Method*, 9 He is concerned with the status of those lives which are reduced to bare life. An example of this - without recourse to the state of exception - would be the status of refugees, who are illegal and subjugated to the good or bad will of the nations where they end up without any rights of their own.


the paradigm for contemporary life. Secondly, the exception is so problematic, because it strips life of its legality. In the exception the law no longer necessarily protects people. People can be stripped of their most basic rights. As we will see later on, for Agamben the law is also the principle guiding identity. Being declared illegal, then, also entails being stripped of one’s characteristics and identity. As such, the exception reduces life to bare life. Bare life is life that has been completely stripped of all its conditions. It is the mere fact of living. Through the exception’s ability to strip a life of all its rights it is reduced to nothing more than the fact of living. I will establish this point in greater detail later in this chapter. What is important here, however, is that the sovereign’s right to decide over life and death is absolute. The law, because it is subjugated to the whims of the sovereign, does not protect life, but rather limits it.

Agamben’s analysis of the state of exception makes clear that the center of the concept of the law turns out to be the inclusion/exclusion mechanism. The law, Agamben notes, is not concerned with truth or the good, but rather with judgment. Through the analysis of the exception one can add to this that it is a judgment about the question whether someone belongs or not. This belonging is not just a belonging to a state, but also a belonging to humanity. According to Agamben, the concept of belonging is something that has hardly been discussed in political philosophy. Traditional political philosophy only deals with people insofar as they belong to the domain of the

323 Ibid., 3.
law and to the domain of being human.\textsuperscript{328} As we will see, Agamben sees belonging as a fundamental ontological problem. The relationship between law and life is precisely that law decides upon whether life belongs, both to a certain domain of reality as well as to life itself. Bare life, I would claim, is life which is stripped of its belonging to itself.

Opposed to bare life, Agamben places the concept of form-of-life. Form-of-life is life that cannot be separated from its form, that is: life that cannot be separated from its specific facticity. Strangely enough, this means it can never be subsumed under any single identity.\textsuperscript{329} Identity is, as we will see, in Agamben’s analysis a function of the law. The law functions by reducing an individual to a certain, discrete set of characteristics. It claims that any life is its facticity. This life is vulnerable to the reduction to bare life, precisely because its conditions and identity are not its own, but rather the laws’. Identity is attributed to someone by the law and the law can also remove it. Form-of-life escapes this reduction by the law, because its facticity is its own. The law does not decide its identity and characteristics, but form-of-life itself does. Agamben’s goal in his project is precisely to find a form-of-life. A life not bound by any identity attributed to it by the law.\textsuperscript{330}

Agamben’s overall project, then, is an attempt to discover form-of-life. Now, the question is: what is needed to escape bare life that is produced by the state of exception and come to form-of-life? As I will argue, Agamben finds an answer to this question in Paul’s theory of the remnant. Even though Agamben does not use this exact terminology in his book on Paul, what is at stake is

\textsuperscript{329} Agamben,\textit{ Means without Ends. Notes on Politics}, 3.
precisely the possibility of a life that can escape the reduction to its own facticity, which the law tries to impose on it. Paradoxically, what is needed to achieve this is a second state of exception. This second state of exception, however, differs from the first one in a decisive way. To overcome bare life, the law needs to be suspended. This should not be done by the sovereign, however, because in the state of exception the sovereign takes the place of the law. Rather, a messianic state of exception is needed. Only the messiah can take the place of the sovereign without renewing the logic of sovereignty.

It is precisely the possibility of thinking a messianic state of exception that Agamben finds in Paul, because as Agamben writes at the beginning of *The Time That Remains*, Paul is the thinker of the messianic. The messianic appears only in Agamben’s reading of Paul in the form of the state of exception it instates and the suspension of the law that this exception entails. In Agamben’s reading, Paul develops messianic life as a form-of-life. This messianic life is constituted through the messianic suspension of the law. I will examine what this messianic life looks like later in this chapter. Similar to the procedure I followed in my engagements with Heidegger’s and Badiou’s readings of Paul, in the following I want to characterize the theory of subjectivity Agamben finds in Paul.

I have characterised Agamben’s project as an attempt to liberate life from the sovereign. In his excellent book, Matthew Abbott convincingly argues that Agamben’s biopolitical framework is a repetition of Heidegger’s problem of ontological difference in a different register. Bare life is not a sociological or ontic category, but rather an ontological one. It denotes the basic structure of

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332 Abbott, *The Figure of This World: Agamben and the Question of Political Ontology*, 19.
human life under the law. Similarly, form-of-life is an ontological structure for a life liberated from the law, because it is a life whose being cannot be reduced to its facticity. At the other side of this problem, a number of scholars argue that sovereignity is also an ontological concept for Agamben. From this ontological reading of Agamben’s project, the question becomes clear: how can Agamben found a new, messianic subjectivity ontologically?

3.4. Subjectivity

Similar to Badiou, Agamben begins his exposition of subjectivity in Paul’s letters with a consideration of Paul’s analysis of his contemporary situation. Where in Badiou’s reading Paul characterised his world through the Jew/Greek dichotomy, Agamben finds the central focus of Paul’s view on his world in the Greek term klētos, which means called.

The second chapter of The Time That Remains is completely devoted to the fifth word of the incipit of the letter to the Romans, the word klētos. About this word Agamben remarks:

The term klētos, which comes from the verb kaleō, to call, means ‘calling’ (Jerome translates it as vocatus). This term appears in the greeting of the first Letter to the Corinthians; in the other letters, we often find the following formula: ‘apostle by the will of God.’ We should pause to reflect on this term, for in Paul the linguistic family of the word kaleō acquires a technical meaning that is essential to Paul’s definition of messianic life, especially when found in the deverbative form klēsis, meaning ‘vocation, calling.’

333 Ibid., 20.
334 van der Heiden, Ontology after Ontotheology: Plurality, Event, and Contingency in Contemporary Philosophy, 242; and Whyte, Catastrophe and Redemption, 105.
335 Agamben, The Time That Remains, 19.
As Agamben notes, *klētos* stems form the verb *kaleō*, which means calling. *Klētos*, being the adjective form of *kaleō*, denotes the condition of being called. As we will see, this condition is central to the subject. Agamben examines *klētos* and its cognates in such great detail, because it is a technical term in Paul. More specifically, it is a technical messianic term. The messianic meaning of *klētos* is found in 1 Corinthians 7:17-22.

17 However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches. 18 Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. 19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything. 20 Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called. 21 Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. Even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever. (NRSV)

Central to Agamben’s analysis of *klētos* is that there are two forms of calling on Paul, worldly calling and messianic calling. The worldly calling is the situation towards one has been called by God through the Law of Moses. This worldly condition is instated by the old covenant, which is superseded by what can be called the Christ event. This is, to use a different phrase that will gain an important meaning in this chapter, one’s socio-juridical condition. Agamben translates this *klēsis*, the noun form of *kaleō*, as vocation. Vocation literally means a calling, but it can also have the meaning of profession. Through Weber and Luther, Agamben traces the meaning of the German word *Beruf*, occupation back to *klēsis* and specifically to 1 Corinthians 7:17-22. 336 What this shows is that *klēsis* is not a special category, for example the calling to be a

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336 Ibid., 19–22.
priest, but that every vocation or profession is fundamentally a calling. This is not to say that every profession is imbued with a divine essence, but rather the opposite. The vocations Paul is talking about, at least in Agamben’s reading, concern the conditions of everyday life, such as a profession, a religious affiliation or a social condition.

Now, what is the ontological basis for this order of the world as *klēsis*? This *klēsis* has, in Agamben’s reading of Paul, been instated and ordained by God. In the chapter on *klētos*, Agamben discusses in great detail how *klēsis* should be understood in Paul. In the chapter directly following Agamben seemingly discusses an entirely new topic, namely Paul’s analysis of the law. What becomes clear from the discussion of the working of the law, however, is that it is precisely the law that sustains the *klēsis*. In a philologically very careful way, Agamben inquires into what the law is for Paul. How does Paul understand the law? About this Agamben writes:

Paul actually starts by stating that the law operates primarily in instituting divisions and separations. In so doing, he seems to take the etymological meaning of the Greek term *nomos* seriously, since he uses the term to designate the Torah as well as laws in general, in that *nomos* derives from *nemō*, “to divide, to attribute parts.”

For Paul the law is in the first place Jewish law, which in Agamben’s analysis means that it divides. Agamben bases this on the fact that etymologically the Greek word for law, *nomos*, stems from the word *nemō*, which means to divide. So, the law divides, but what does it divide? Agamben writes:

The fundamental partition of Jewish law is the one between Jews and non-Jews, or in Paul’s words, between *ioudaioi* and *ethne*. In the Bible, the concept of a

337 Ibid., 47.
“people” is in fact always already divided between am and goy (plural goyim). Am is Israel, the elected people, with whom Yahweh formed a berit, a pact; the goyim are the other peoples.338

This division is not just a theoretical division in Jewish religious-legal theory, but – as Taubes notes – it is also the way Jewish people think.339 The law as a division between am and goy is fundamental for Jewish culture and Jewish thinking. In a certain way this division is absolute. It divides all people into these two categories. You are either an am or a goy. You are one of the people or a stranger.

Agamben is certainly correct that for Paul the law decides upon being a Jew or a non-Jew, although this is not an inventive reading. The novelty of Agamben’s approach lies in the fact that he stretches this concept of the law to not just be limited to the Jew/non-Jew binary, but to every identity.340 Not only the Jew/non-Jew binary is decided by the law, but also being female/non-female, citizen/non-citizen and even human/non-human.341

This is Agamben’s analysis of Paul’s situation and, as is the actual stake, also our situation. The law, through the law’s institution of exhaustive socio-juridical conditions, subsumes life. The law is the sole instance that can decide upon who and what someone is. As a consequence, the law decides

338 Ibid.
340 Kaufman, “The Saturday of Messianic Time (Agamben and Badiou on the Apostle Paul),” 44.
341 Although it seems counterintuitive to interpret the distinction female/non-female as a problem of the law, it is nonetheless an insightful point. In everyday life people tend to see gender as a biological condition. Insights in the social construction of identity, however, have shown us that gender is not in the first place a biological condition, but rather a juridical one. Many bureaucratic processes contain a question about gender. The law demands of people that they self-identify as one of two genders, male or female, which in the context of contemporary Western society, ends up being male/non-male. So, the law – broadly considered – is actually that instance instates the distinction between female/non-female, not biology.
upon life and ontology. Although Agamben does not explicitly make this claim, it is not difficult to see how in a world in which the law can exert this power over life, law can reduce any life to bare life by stripping it of all identity and being. The question is, then, how can the messianic intervene and open up the possibility of form-of-life, which is a life which is not defined by identity or being. To answer this question, Agamben turns to the messianic event and its consequent suspension of the law.

Numerous scholars have commented on the importance of the messianic in Agamben. De la Durantaye notes that almost of all of the commentators on Agamben’s work take the meaning of the concept for granted. Nowhere in his entire oeuvre does Agamben make clear exactly what he means with it. Mills also sees this point and she uses The Time That Remains to explain it, because it gives the most detailed account of the messianic. Mills goes on to give an elaboration of Agamben’s concept of the messianic based on his conception of messianic time. While this is indeed an important aspect of Agamben’s account of the messianic, Mills – and with her most other scholars – glosses over a seemingly insignificant terminological detail. In The Time That Remains Agamben does not just talk about the messianic, but rather about the messianic event.

Matthew Abbott is one of the scholars who does seem to pick up on this fact. Even though his account of Agamben hardly deals with Paul, in discussing the messianic Abbott consistently speaks about the messianic event.

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event. Although Agamben does not have a theory of the event, on multiple occasions in his reading of Paul he uses the term ‘messianic event’. For Paul, this messianic event has already happened in Christ. Agamben, however, is much more ambiguous in this regard. He is not interested in the actual messiah, but rather in the formal aspects of the messianic event.

Abbott notes that the messianic event is an undoing of the totality of the world. Through an analysis of the concepts of redemption and happiness, Abbott argues that Agamben, influenced by his reading of Benjamin, makes the messianic an immanent event. That is, the messianic event has to intervene in this world and it does not happen in any transcendent realm or reality. It is a concrete, immanent occurrence. The messianic event indicates the transformation of the world. Agamben is not alone in this claim.

The messianic – and its cognates – are concepts that feature heavily in a specific, contemporary philosophical tradition. They are terms that have been appropriated in contemporary philosophy from their original religious background. The messianic, as a philosophical concept, is a combination of

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345 Abbott, The Figure of This World: Agamben and the Question of Political Ontology, 184.
346 Agamben, The Time That Remains, 71.
347 Abbott, The Figure of This World: Agamben and the Question of Political Ontology, 185.
348 Ibid., 186.
Jewish, religious messianism and radical Marxism. This encounter between messianism and Marxism is not forced, but actually comes forth from structural similarities between the revolutionary nature of both Jewish messianism as well as Marxism, as Löwy claims.

In his essay “Towards an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism”, Gershom Scholem discusses the Jewish conception of messianism against the Christian conception. He begins with the claim that messianism is always about redemption. The Jewish and Christian idea of messianism differ from each other in their view on redemption. Scholem writes:

Judaism, in all of its forms and manifestations, has always maintained a concept of redemption as an event which takes place publicly, on the stage of history and within the community. It is an occurrence which takes place in the visible world and which cannot be conceived apart from such a visible appearance. In contrast, Christianity conceives of redemption as an event in the spiritual and unseen realm, an event which is reflected in the soul, in the private world of each individual and which effects an inner transformation which need not correspond to anything outside.

350 The introduction of this Marxist messianism can be traced to the “Jewish generation of 1914”, a group thinkers - including Bloch, Benjamin, Lukács and Scholem - who opposed the secular Judaism of the German middle classes. The “founding text” of this movement was Buber’s Three Theses on Judaism. See Martin Buber, Drei Reden über das Judentum (Frankfurt am Main: Rütten & Loenig, 1916); For a substantial introduction on this group of thinkers, see: Anson Rabinach, In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment Weimar and Now (Berkeley, CA/ Los Angeles, CA/ London: University of California Press, 1997).


The messianic, then, is the overturning of the order of the world in which everything is determined by its *klēsis*. It is, as Derrida notes, "always revolutionary; it has to be".\textsuperscript{353} As we have seen, the law decides on life. It forces life into its exhaustive politics of identity. The world, then, is a rigid world, which follows the rule of law to the letter. The messianic event is the revolutionary moment that can overturn this logic by overcoming the law. The question is: how does the messianic event suspend and overcome the law?

To answer this question, Agamben turns to Paul's critique of the law. He finds that the operative term in Paul's vocabulary regarding the law is *katargein*. It means to deactivate and more specifically to deactivate the law. Since the law is nothing but the principle that instates divisions in the social order – for Paul Jew/non-Jew – *katargein* is the messianic deactivation of the social conditions. Agamben notes:

> Paul constantly uses one verb [...] the verb *katergeō*, a true key word in the Pauline messianic vocabulary.\textsuperscript{354}

Agamben traces the etymological roots of the word and notes that the verb was hardly used in Greek before Paul. This is why Agamben calls it a Pauline, messianic word. Agamben remarks that the opposite of *katargeō* is not *poieō*, but *energeō*. *Katargein* is, then, not a non-*poiein*, a non-making, but rather a non-energizing.\textsuperscript{355} Agamben notes that Paul plays with this opposition between *katergeō* and *energeō*.\textsuperscript{356} This is evidenced in Romans 7:5-6 for example. There is, however, no textual or contextual evidence for Agamben's claim that

\textsuperscript{353} Derrida, *Specters of Marx. The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, 211.

\textsuperscript{354} Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 95.

\textsuperscript{355} Ibid., 96.

\textsuperscript{356} Ibid., 96–97.
Paul was aware of the Aristotelean opposition between actuality and potentiality. Besides the texts that Agamben explicitly mentions, Philippians 3:21 and Ephesians 3:7 – of which Paul’s authorship is dubious – Paul never uses *dynamis* and *energeia* or variants of these words within three words distance of each other. 357 Even in these two texts, the Aristotelean connection is dubious. This does not mean, however, that Agamben’s interpretation of *katargein* in terms of act and potentiality is incorrect. Rather, Agamben opens up a new way to look at Paul. According to this interpretation, for Paul the messianic operation *par excellence* is a taking out of the act of the law, thereby restoring it to potentiality. As we will see, this leads Agamben to a very interesting reading of Paul.

So, according to Agamben, Paul’s messianic thinking is structured around the pairing of potentiality and act and its related cognates. Agamben does not develop his thoughts on potentiality any further in *The Time That Remains*, however as Agamben writes in the essay “On Potentiality”:

> I could state the subject of my work as an attempt to understand the meaning of the verb “can” [*potere*]. What do I mean when I say: “I can, I cannot”? 358

The concept of potentiality is not just central to Agamben’s thinking, but also central in his reading of Paul as a messianic writer. The most substantial treatment Agamben has of the concept of potentiality can be found in Agamben’s essay “On Potentiality”. In this essay, Agamben considers Aristotle’s interpretation of potentiality. Agamben writes:

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357 See ibid., 92.
The concept of potentiality has a long history in Western philosophy, in which it has occupied a central position at least since Aristotle. [...] My concern here is not simply historiographical. I do not intend simply to restore currency to philosophical categories that are no longer in use. On the contrary, I think that the concept of potentiality has never ceased to function in the life and history of humanity, most notably in that part of humanity that has grown and developed its potency [potenza] to the point of imposing its power over the whole planet.359

How does the concept of potentiality relate to the law? As Jessica Whyte points out, it is not the concept of potentiality itself that imposes itself, but rather the subordination of potentiality to actuality.360 It is precisely through this subjugation of potentiality to actuality that the law can be exhaustive. Through the politics of actuality, the law inscribes stable identities on people. We will see that this logic will be overcome through the messianic overturning of the law.

The point of Agamben’s analysis of potentiality is precisely that he inverts the traditional relationship between potentiality and actuality. Agamben’s interpretation of potentiality in Aristotle is based on Agamben’s reading of the Metaphysics.361 This reading is heavily mediated by Heidegger’s lecture course on Aristotle.362 Agamben begins by discussing the two types of potentiality one can find in Aristotle. Agamben writes:

Aristotle begins by distinguishing two kinds of potentiality. There is a generic potentiality, and this is the one that is meant when we say, for example, that a

359 Ibid.
360 Whyte, Catastrophe and Redemption, 126.
child has the potential to know, or that he or she can potentially become the head of State. This generic sense is not the one that interests Aristotle. The potentiality that interests him is the one that belongs to someone who, for example, has knowledge or an ability. In this sense, we say of the architect that he or she has the potential to build, of the poet that he or she has the potential to write poems. It is clear that this existing potentiality differs from the generic potentiality of the child. The child, Aristotle says, is potential in the sense that he must suffer an alteration (a becoming other) through learning. Whoever already possesses knowledge, by contrast, is not obliged to suffer an alteration; he is instead potential, Aristotle says, thanks to a *hexis*, a “having,” on the basis of which he can also not bring his knowledge into actuality (*me energein*) by not making a work, for example. Thus the architect is potential insofar as he has the potential to not-build, the poet the potential to not-write poems.\footnote{Agamben, “On Potentiality,” 179.}

The key difference between the two types of potentiality is that the potentiality of a child is only one possible actualization. This actualization is the purpose of the potentiality. With the second type of potentiality, which I will refer to simply as potentiality from here on out, one has the potential to be many things. This potentiality does not have a single actualization, nor is it exhausted by actualization. Heidegger uses the striking example of the potter. Does the potter lose his ability to make pots when he is having a beer? Certainly not. The potentiality to do something is not exhausted in the actualization, nor does one lose the potentiality when one is not using the potentiality.\footnote{Heidegger, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics T 1-3: On the Essence and Actuality of Force*, 146.} This form of potentiality is essentially an ability or a know-how.

Agamben takes this argument one step further. He argues that being potential means having a presence of an absence.\footnote{Agamben, “On Potentiality,” 179.} What this means is that a potentiality does not gain its meaning form a possible actualization, but rather
from its privation. According to Agamben, this is typical for the human being. Only a human is characterized by its inexhaustible potential. Agamben writes:

Other living beings are capable only of their specific potentiality; they can only do this or that. But human beings are the animals who are capable of their own impotentiality. The greatness of human potentiality is measured by the abyss of human impotentiality.

This definition of human potentiality as impotentiality is crucial for Agamben, because it allows him to think one thing: the unlimited excess of the potential over the actual. Impotentiality, being a privation of potentiality, is what happens to a potentiality when it is actualized. As we have already seen, for Agamben a potentiality is not exhausted in the actualization. This is precisely because in every actualization of $x$, human beings always have the potential to not-$x$. Even in the actualization, the potential – albeit in a negative sense – remains. This leads Agamben to conclude that the human being always has more potential than it can actualize. This is the impotential.

How does this potentiality relate itself to the law? Agamben carefully examines the *katargein*. Agamben writes that:

[K]atergeo signals a taking out of *energeia*, a taking out of the act.

*Energeia* signifies actualization or enactment. *Energeō*, then, denotes the movement from potential towards act. Both *katergeo* and *energeō* stem from *ergon*, a word signifying something along the lines of force or work. The

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prefixes *en* and *kat’* signal opposing movements, respectively a putting in and a taking out. Apparently, the *katergeō/energeō* pairing signal a putting in and taking out of *ergon*. When it is in effect there is *energeia*, when it is made inoperative, there is a privation of *energeia*, a not being in act. Because there is no *energeia*, there is room for the *dynamis*. The *katargein*, then, is fairly literally not a destruction of the law, but removing power from the law.\(^{369}\)

Through deactivating the law, it is simultaneously suspended and fulfilled.\(^{370}\)

Now, to return to the first question: how does the messianic suspension of the law structure a new subject? As we have seen, Agamben determines the law as a principle of division. The law calls all people to certain identities or – paraphrasing McLoughlin – being called means being a subject to the law.\(^{371}\)

The messianic event intervenes in this calling. It is a calling of the calling. Agamben writes:

\[\textit{Klēsis} \text{ indicates the particular transformation that every juridical status and worldly condition undergoes because of, and only because of, its relation to the messianic event. It is therefore not a matter of eschatological indifference, but of change, almost an internal shifting of each and every single worldly condition by virtue of being “called.”}\]

For Paul, the *ekklēsia*, the messianic community, is


\(^{370}\) Agamben traces Hegel’s concept of *Aufhebung* in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* through Luther’s use of Paul’s *katargein*. For Hegel, however, the *Aufhebung* is part of the dialectic movement. See Georg W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); In Agamben’s reading of Paul, there is no dialectical aspect. See Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 100.

literally all klēseis, all messianic vocations. The messianic vocation does not, however, have any specific content; it is nothing but the repetition of those same factical or juridical conditions in which or as which we are called.\textsuperscript{372}

The messianic event, then, manifests itself as a calling of the calling. This is not a new calling, but rather a recalling of the same calling. It is a repetition of the original calling, but this time in a messianic light. Agamben continues:

Vocation calls for nothing and to no place. For this reason it may coincide with the factical condition in which each person finds himself called, but for this very reason, it also revokes the condition from top to bottom. The messianic vocation is the revocation of every vocation.\textsuperscript{373}

The messianic event revokes every condition. This revocation entails a difficult relation to the conditions that are revoked. On the one hand, the conditions remain the same, but on the other hand they are changed ‘from top to bottom’. This is the simultaneous suspension and fulfillment of the katargein.

The law, which instates all conditions, is the principle of division. The law divides people based on their identity markers. Every identity marker is, in its turn, forced into a binary A or non-A opposition. The law of non-contradiction and the law of the excluded third sustain this logic of the law. So, not only does the law only see the world in terms of A or non-A, it also prohibits any other option.\textsuperscript{374} Expressed in terms of the potentiality/act distinction, the law sees every identity marker as a generic potentiality, which is exhaustive. Like the potentiality of a child, the potentiality of an identity marker is exhausted in the actualization. Either one is something in potential,

\textsuperscript{372} Agamben, \textit{The Time That Remains}, 22–23.
\textsuperscript{373} Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{374} Ibid., 49.
thereby not having a condition, or one is something in actuality, thereby having it. Through this simple logic, the law has a hold over life. The messianic reinterpretation of potentiality in the *katargein* is the manner in which law’s hold over life can be overcome.375

A calling instated the law, but this calling is itself revoked through the messianic. The law is, then, subject to a similar procedure that created it, namely division. The messianic suspension of the law, then, entails a division of the division created by the law.376 Agamben invokes Benjamin’s cut of Apelles and Nicholas of Cusa’s logic to explain this division of a division.377 The messianic event opens up a space for a non non-A next to the A and the non-A. This non non-A is not reducible to any identity or non-identity, but rather is a remnant, which is introduced into every vocation by the messianic revocation. Agamben finds Paul’s theory of the remnant in Romans 11:1-26.378 In this passage, Paul asks the question whether God has rejected his people, the Jews, because the law is now suspended. Agamben writes:

> How should we conceive of this “remnant of Israel”? The problem is misunderstood from the very start when the remnant is taken as a numeric remainder or portion, as is the case with several theologians who understand it as that portion of the Jews who survived the eschatological catastrophe, or as a kind of bridge between ruin and salvation. It is even more misleading to interpret the remnant as outright identical to Israel, in the sense of its being an elected people

377 Ibid., 50–51.
378 Agamben also expounds on the idea of the remnant in Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 162–63. However, this is just a short prefiguration of what he writes in *The Time That Remains*. Therefore, I will not discuss the concept of the remnant in the former book.
that survived the final destruction of peoples. A closer reading of the prophetic
texts shows that the remnant is closer to being a consistency or figure that Israel
assumes in relation to election or to the messianic event. It is therefore neither the
all, nor apart of the all, but the impossibility for the part and the all to coincide
with themselves or with each other. At a decisive instant, the elected people,
every people, will necessarily situate itself as a remnant, as not-all.\textsuperscript{379}

Agamben begins by defining what the remnant is not. It is not a numeric
remainder. It is not Paul’s point that the messianic event makes a new, but
smaller division. The remnant is not a smaller group of \textit{electi}. It is also not the
same as the Jewish people. The division between Jew and non-Jew has been
suspended and is no longer defining. Rather, the remnant is a figure that people
assume when confronted by the messianic event. It is a mode of being.

Because of the suspension of the social-juridical conditions, it becomes
impossible for any group to coincide with itself or with any other group. Why
is this the case? No condition is defining. The law is no longer exhaustive.\textsuperscript{380}
The law cannot divide reality while still doing justice to life. So, there is always
more than the division the law instates, but what is that something more?
Agamben writes:

\begin{quote}
The remnant is therefore both an excess of the all with regard to the part, and of
the part with regard to the all. It functions as a very peculiar kind of
soteriological machine. As such, it only concerns messianic time and only exists
therein. In the \textit{telos}, when God will be “all in all,” the messianic remnant will not
harbor any particular privilege and will have exhausted its meaning in losing
itself in the \textit{pleroma} (1 Thess. 4:15: “we, who remain alive, unto the coming of

\textsuperscript{379} Agamben, \textit{The Time That Remains}, 54–55.
\textsuperscript{380} Ibid., 50.
the Lord shall not overtake them which are asleep”). But in the time of the now, the only real time, there is nothing other than the remnant.381

The remnant subverts the law, because it overtops the relation between the part and the all. According to the law a group of people is a group based on certain characteristics, for example being a Jew. This division is doubly exhaustive. On the one hand, the group is nothing more than the sum of its parts. It is just the collection of individuals contained within it. There is no excess of the all with regard to the part. On the other hand, the group identity is defining for every individual. The law makes you a Jew and does not allow you to be anything but a Jew. There is no excess of the part with regard to the all. The messianic event changes this. After the messianic event it is impossible for a people to coincide with itself.382 The reason that the coincidence of a group with itself becomes impossible is that the messianic introduces a remnant between every identity and itself. This remnant is the non-coincidence of identity with itself. Agamben writes:

Rather, this “transcendental” involves an operation that divides the divisions of the law themselves and renders them inoperative, without ever reaching any final ground. No universal man, no Christian can be found in the depths of the Jew or the Greek, neither as a principle nor as an end; all that is left is a remnant and the impossibility of the Jew or the Greek to coincide with himself. The messianic vocation separates every klēsis from itself: engendering a tension within itself: without ever providing it with some other identity; hence, Jew as non-Jew, Greek as non-Greek.383

381 Ibid., 56.
382 Ibid., 52.
383 Ibid., 52–53.
The remnant is that excess of potentiality which always necessarily remains. Because of the messianic non-coincidence of the all with the part and the part with the all, no group can be exhausted by the sum of its parts. Similarly, even though every person has a set of identity markers, which is necessarily partial—someone is a Jew and thus not a Christian—this does not exhaust their being. In both cases, the messianic event replaces a generic potentiality with a 'proper' potentiality, that is, the remnant, which is introduced into every socio-juridical condition, is an inexhaustible remainder of potentiality. However, this is not a ground of any kind for a new identity. Agamben emphasizes that there is nothing at the bottom of this remnant. It is not a principle or an end; it is not a ground for any kind of universal, Christian man.\textsuperscript{384} The remnant is the pure impossibility to exhaust potentiality.

Now, the question is: what kind of subject stems from this messianic suspension of the law? I have already noted that identity is no longer exhaustive and that after the messianic event the law can no longer structure a subject. The actuality of all conditions is suspended, but these conditions still remain. To determine what this means, Agamben turns to the hōs mē passage, which also proved to be so important for Heidegger. Moreover, Agamben even explicitly mentions Heidegger’s reading of Paul in this regard.\textsuperscript{385} The passage in question is 1 Corinthians 7:29-32. 1 Corinthians 7:29-32 reads as follows:

\begin{quote}
29 I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none,\textsuperscript{30} and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions,\textsuperscript{31} and
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{385} Agamben, The Time That Remains, 33.
those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. (NRSV)

This passage is, according to Agamben, the definition of messianic life. As we will come to see in this chapter, all the aspects of messianic life can be found in this passage. The most important structure of messianic life is the ὅσ μὲ. ὅσ μὲ is the Greek for ‘as not’, which Paul repeatedly uses in this passage. Agamben remarks about the ὅσ μὲ:

Ὅσ μὲ, “as not”: this is the formula concerning messianic life and is the ultimate meaning of κλησις. Vocation calls for nothing and to no place. 386

The messianic calling revokes the worldly calling by way of the ὅσ μὲ. The messianic calling takes a worldly calling, such as the social-juridical condition of having a wife and revokes it through the ὅσ μὲ. This revocation does not destroy the worldly calling, but it does say how this calling should be lived. It should be lived as not being such. This is not a matter of pretending that the condition does not exist. Agamben explicitly rejects this. 387 Rather, the ὅσ μὲ is a way of living a worldly calling. This is all the messianic vocation is and does. It does not have any content of itself. That is why Agamben can say that the “vocation calls for nothing and to no place.” 388

The messianic vocation is not a new condition that replaces the old, worldly condition. Rather, the messianic vocation operates within the worldly vocation. Essentially, the messianic vocation is a nullification of the worldly vocation without destroying it. 389 The messianic enters into the world by

386 Ibid., 23.
387 Ibid., 35.
388 Ibid., 23.
389 Ibid., 23–24.
nullifying it. But what does it nullify exactly?

The Pauline ἡσίμε seems to be a special type of tensor, for it does not push a concept's semantic field toward that of another concept. Instead, it sets it against itself in the form of the as not. Weeping as not weeping. [...] According to the principle of messianic klēsis, one determinate factical condition is set in relation to itself—the weeping is pushed toward the weeping, the rejoicing toward the rejoicing. In this manner, it revokes the factical condition and undermines it without altering its form.390

The ἡσίμε pushes a vocation towards itself in a nullifying movement. The messianic vocation says: you are called in a certain way and your calling has not changed, but the meaning of the calling is no longer the same. Someone who is called to be a husband is still called to be a husband, but what it means to be a husband is fundamentally changed. All identity should be lived through the ἡσίμε, that is, they still exist, but are no longer defining for life. This is what the enigmatic statement of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:31 means.

Even though Agamben does not use the terminology of enactment in his interpretation of the ἡσίμε, his analysis does end up with this point. Like Heidegger, Agamben stresses that factically things remain the same, but that they are lived in another way. Agamben adds with regards to Heidegger’s account, however, an explicit discussion of identity. Agamben writes:

Pauline klēsis is a theory of the interrelation between the messianic and the subject, a theory that settles its differences once and for all with presumed identities and ensuing properties. In this sense, that which is not (ta μέ ontα) is stronger than that which is.391

390 Ibid., 24.
391 Ibid., 41.
The change in the subject happens precisely because the social-juridical conditions change. The social-juridical conditions, specifically belonging to this or that group, are what make up human life and thus the subject. The messianic event decisively rejects all these belongings as being defining for the subject. The subject is no longer its identities. What is left is what it is not. Based on this, certain scholars, such as Simon Critchley, speak about the meontological subject in Paul based at least in part on their understanding of Agamben, that is, a subject which is only a denial of the conditions which are. Essentially, it is a subject which only denies the worldly conditions, but does not replace it with anything else. However, it is my contention that the subject is precisely not meontological for Agamben. At least not in the banal sense of a subject defined by negativity. Rather, it is a subject marked by potentiality. As we will see, the subject is not defined by its lack of identity, but rather by the potentiality, which stems from the open space created by the nullifying movement of the ἡως μῆ.

What happens after the messianic event? The messianic revokes all worldly vocations and calls vocations to their own revocations. However, this is not a negation. The conditions are not destroyed, but rather their power is annulled. They are no longer valid as defining characteristics. For the subject this means that it can no longer be defined based on its identity or even by a list of all its characteristics. No such list can ever fully define any subject. There is always a remnant that remains.

The remnant manifests itself in different ways. Within a group it is the impossibility of that group to be defined exclusively in terms of its members. Within the subject, it is the impossibility of the subject to fully coincide with

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itself. This impossibility stems, in both cases, from an excess of the potential with regards to the actual but also with regards to the potential. No potentiality, whether it is actualized or not, is ever exhausted. Because of the messianic suspension of the actual conditions, power is removed from the social-juridical conditions and restored to potentiality. What remains for the subject, then, is an inexhaustible core of potentiality.

This changes the form of the subject substantially. The subject follows the remarkable logic of the messianic in that nothing has changed, but everything is different. The subject remains in the vocations in which it was called. It still belongs to the same groups as it did, although these groups itself also exceed their actuality now. The factual life of the subject has not changed. What has changed, however, is that these belongings are no longer defining and limiting for the subject. It belongs to certain actual groups, but the subject always has the potentiality to exceed every actuality. The subject is no longer what it is, but it is what it can be.

It is for this reason that I believe that there is no such thing as a meontological subject in Agamben. The subject is by no means defined by what it is not, nor does it negate its actuality. Its factual conditions remain, but it also gains the potentiality to exceed every potentiality. Rather than a meontological subject there is a subject defined by its potentiality in Agamben.

In this analysis of the subject, Agamben is very close to Heidegger, who makes the same argument about the change in subjectivity in Paul. This raises the question of whether Heidegger also reads Paul as a messianic thinker. While Heidegger obviously does not explicitly claim this, it is my contention that Heidegger does read Paul as a messianic thinker according to Agamben's

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conception of the messianic. As has become clear from this chapter and the chapter on Heidegger, Agamben and Heidegger are very similar in their readings of Paul.

This emphasis on potentiality, which the messianic event introduces, has one further effect for the subject which is constituted by it, namely that it leads to a subject marked by a radical contingency. 394 About this, Jessica Whyte writes:

> If potentiality passed immediately into the act, then each act would be necessary. Humans could therefore be defined by a vocation, a fact, by a biology that was our destiny. In contrast to other living beings, which “are capable only of their specific potentiality,” humans, Agamben argues, are also capable of our own impotentiality, which ensures that we are capable of being other than we are—that we are beings of pure potentiality, irreducible to biology, identity, or vocation.395

The law, with its focus on generic potentiality, ties every life to necessity. According to Whyte, if every potentiality has a goal in a single teleologic actualization, then there is indeed no freedom. When – as is Agamben’s analysis – human lives are defined by this potentiality, then life itself is subjugated to the law and its necessity. 396 The messianic subject always has a remnant of potentiality left. This remnant allows this life to be truly contingent.

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395 Whyte, Catastrophe and Redemption, 110.
396 See also: Leland de la Durantaye, “Homo Profanus: Giorgio Agamben’s Profane Philosophy,” Boundary 2 35, no. 3 (2008): 61; Abbott also makes this point on the level of the orld instead of the level of huma life. See Abbott, The Figure of This World: Agamben and the Question of Political Ontology, 186.
Messianic life is only determined by itself. There is no pre-given, external law that can decide on the being of messianic life.

At this point, I want to indicate the parallel between Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben in their readings of Paul. Even though this dissertation is structured in such a way that the comparison between the three attains the highest degree of clarity, it still remarkable to see that all three authors – starting from different backgrounds, with different methods and from different problems – discover in Paul the same basic subject, namely a contingent, non-identitarian subject, which is further characterized by a distinct understanding of temporality, world, and community. In the final chapter, I will discuss these parallels. In the rest of this chapter, I want to – in by now familiar fashion – consider how Agamben's specific form of contingent, Pauline subjectivity affects the three themes of temporality, world and community.

3.5. Temporality

For Agamben, a shift in temporality is not just an epiphenomenon of the messianic event, but rather the messianic is itself a change in temporality. How does he develop this? Agamben begins his discussion of temporality by looking at three competing figures, namely the prophet, the apocalyptic thinker and the apostle. Each of these three lives a specific temporality, but only the apostle lives the messianic temporality.

Agamben starts his consideration of temporality in the fourth chapter when he discusses the word 'apostolos', apostle. Paul defined himself as an apostle and Agamben opposes this figure to two different, but similar figures: the prophet and the apocalyptic thinker. These three figures each have their own form of temporality characterising them. It is from this opposition that Agamben develops the messianic conception of temporality. It is interesting to
note that messianic temporality is intrinsically bound up with the figure of the apostle, because apostleship is precisely the form of messianic subjectivity. The messianic subject, then, has its very own temporality.

Agamben begins by introducing the figure of the prophet. Agamben writes:

What is a prophet? He is first and foremost a man with an unmediated relation to the ruah Yahweh (the breath of Yahweh), who receives a word from God which does not properly belong to him; [...] As an ecstatic spokesperson for God, the nabi is clearly distinct from the apostle, who, as an emissary with a determinate purpose, must carry out his assignment with lucidity and search on his own for the words of the message, which he may consequently define as “my announcement”.397

Agamben defines the prophet as someone who does not speak for himself, but only conveys the message he received from God. The apostle also has a message from God, but he needs to find the words himself. The philosophical difference between these two figures lies in the mediatorship. The apostle is a medium of the message, whereas the prophet can convey the message directly. Because the prophet is a direct conduit of the message, his personhood and personality do not affect the message. The prophet can literally repeat the message, but the apostle needs to interpret and translate it. According to Agamben, this is not the case for the apostle, who functions as a medium, who needs to interpret and translate the message in order for it to be understandable. The consequence of this is that the apostle is always directly involved in his message.

397 Agamben, The Time That Remains, 60.
What kind of temporality corresponds to these figures, Agamben writes:

However one understands this closure, the prophet is essentially defined through his relation to the future. [...] [T]he message is always about a time to come, a time not yet present. This is what marks the difference between the prophet and the apostle. The apostle speaks forth from the arrival of the Messiah. At this point prophecy must keep silent, for now prophecy is truly fulfilled. (This is how one should read its innermost tension toward closure.) The word passes on to the apostle, to the emissary of the Messiah, whose time is no longer the future, but the present. This is why Paul's technical term for the messianic event is *ho nyn kairos*, "the time of the now"; this is why Paul is an apostle and not a prophet. 398

The prophet speaks before the messiah comes about the coming of the messiah. The prophecy is fulfilled once the messiah comes. The apostle, however, only begins to speak at that point. The apostle announces how things have changed now that the messiah has come. As opposed to the prophet – who speaks of the future – one can say that the apostle speaks about the present.

Agamben further clarifies the messianic temporality by opposing the apostle to the apocalyptic thinker. Agamben writes:

But the apostle must be distinguished from another figure, with whom he is often confused, just as messianic time is confused with eschatological time. The most insidious misunderstanding of the messianic announcement does not consist in mistaking it for prophecy, which is turned toward the future, but for apocalypse, which contemplates the end of time. The apocalyptic is situated on the last day, the Day of Wrath. It sees the end fulfilled and describes what it sees. The time in which the apostle lives is, however, not the *eschaton*, it is not the end of time. [...] What interests the apostle is not the last day, it is not the instant in which time ends, but the time that contracts itself and begins to end (*ho kairos*

398 Ibid., 61.
It is interesting to note that there is a terminological difference between Heidegger and Agamben here. Heidegger reads Paul as an eschatological thinker, but Agamben opposes eschatology to Paul’s messianism. In Agamben’s view eschatology is related to the apocalyptic. They both reject the apocalyptic reading of Paul, but Agamben also considers eschatology to be apocalyptic. So, even though Heidegger and Agamben differ in their terminology, they make the same point, namely that Paul does not speak about the event of the end of the world, but rather about the shape of a world which is ending.

The eschatological or apocalyptic time is the time at which the world ends. It is literally the end of time. It is the fulfillment of time itself. Messianic time is something different. It is not the end of time itself, but it is time as it is ending. It is the time that remains between the messianic event and the end of time. It has nothing to do with the end of time. This is also the reason why, as opposed to the time of the prophet, messianic time is related to the now. Messianic time introduces a remnant into time itself.

For him, the remnant no longer consists in a concept turned toward the future, as with the prophets; it concerns a present experience that defines the messianic “now.” In the time of the now a remnant is produced [gegonen].

Apparently the messianic time is the time of the now, but this is not the same as the present in the everyday sense of the word. The time of the now is neither

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399 Ibid., 62.
400 Ibid., 55.
the now, nor a kind of *nunc stans*. Rather, it is – as we will see – the time that remains until the end of time. Furthermore, Agamben also distinguishes the messianic time from the end of time. The messianic is not the same as apocalypse. To distinguish messianic time from apocalyptic time, Agamben evokes the Jewish tradition of the two worlds. Agamben uses the terminology of division when discussing how messianic time relates to the two *olamim*. Messianic time divides this dualistic division in time. How does Agamben conceive of this? He writes:

On first glance, things seem simple. First, you have secular time, which Paul usually refers to as *chronos*, which spans from creation to the messianic event (for Paul, this is not the birth of Jesus, but his resurrection). Here time contracts itself and begins to end. But this contracted time, which Paul refers to in the expression *ho nyn kairos*, “the time of the now,” lasts until the *parousia*, the full presence of the Messiah. The latter coincides with the Day of Wrath and the end

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401 Boer notes that “time of the now” is not a Pauline phrase, but a Benjamian one. See “Paul of the Gaps. Agamben, Benjamin and the Puppet Player,” in *Paul in the Grip of the Philosophers. The Apostle and Contemporary Continental Philosophy*, ed. Peter Frick (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 64 Agamben’s argument is, however, not dependent on this formulation at all.

of time (but remains indeterminate, even if it is imminent). Time explodes here; or rather, it implodes into the other eon, into eternity. 403

Agamben reads the opposition between *chronos* and *kairos* into Paul. In Agamben’s reading, Paul applies the messianic logic of suspension to chronological time. The messianic event happens within chronological time, but with the occurrence of the event time begins to end.404 This introduces a division into chronological time. Messianic time is wholly different from chronological time, but it does exist within it. The messianic event introduces a remnant into time itself.

As we have seen, the remnant is not a numerical remnant. Likewise, the temporal remnant is not a part of chronological time that is set apart from the rest of time. Rather, it is a process within chronological time that brings chronological time to its end.405 How does the messianic event do this?406 How does the messianic event bring time to its own end? It does this by bringing every instant of chronological time into relation with itself.

The messianic event consists of two distinct moments: firstly, the resurrection, an occurrence which lies in the past and marks the beginning of messianic time and, secondly, the *parousia*, an occurrence in the future which ends messianic time.407 Messianic time transforms chronological time by relating every moment to both the beginning and the end of messianic time.

403 Ibid., 63.
404 Ibid., 64.
405 Ibid., 67–68.
Messianic time takes up both the past and the present at the same time. As Agamben writes:

> Once again, for Paul, the messianic is not a third eon situated between two times; but rather, it is a caesura that divides the division between times and introduces a remnant, a zone of undecidability, in which the past is dislocated into the present and the present is extended into the past. ⁴⁰⁸

This contraction of time only affects the subject. The subject is changed by the messianic event and experiences temporality differently. This is why Agamben writes that messianic time is the time we need to make time end. ⁴⁰⁹ There are two concepts that define how, according to Agamben, messianic time relates to chronological time. These concepts are *typos* and *recapitulation*, and I will argue that these concepts only make sense when they are understood in relation to the subject. These concepts show how the past, present and future intertwine in the messianic subject just like the resurrection and the *parousia* intertwine with chronological time in messianic time.

Firstly, I will clarify the *typos*. In biblical scholarship, typology is usually used to denote the alleged pre-figuration of the New Testament in the Old. Simply put, in the New Testament, Jesus is interpreted to be the messiah announced in the Old Testament. The messiah is the ‘type’ for Jesus. The same can be said for many other Old Testament figures with whom Jesus or the new covenant, which is instated with Jesus, is compared, such as Adam, Moses and Abraham. The concept of the ‘type’ denotes this kind of relationship.

The concept of the *typos* has a very specific temporality. Typology not only means interpreting the New Testament in terms of the Old, but it also

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 74.
⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 68.
means reading the Old Testament as the foreshadowing of the New. This is the point Agamben wants to make. The *typos* signifies that the past and the future mutually refer to each other. The new is already in the old, but the old is also in the new. The past already contains that which comes after it, but the present also contains the past. This can be clearly seen in the dual nature of the messianic event. The resurrection announces the *parousia* and the *parousia* gains its meaning from the resurrection. According to Agamben:

> Through the concept of *typos*, Paul establishes a relation, which we may from this point on call a typological relation, between every event from a past time and *ho nyn kairos*, messianic time.\(^{410}\)

Secondly, I will discuss the recapitulation. According to Paul, messianic time is the fulfillment of time. Agamben takes this to mean that messianic time recapitulates the past as a whole. Agamben writes:

> This recapitulation of the past produces a *plerōma*, a saturation and fulfillment of *kairoi* (messianic *kairoi* are therefore literally full of *chronos*, but an abbreviated, summary *chronos*), that anticipates eschatological *plerōma* when God “will be all in all.”\(^ {411}\)

Every kairological moment, that is, every moment in messianic time, contains the fullness of the past. Agamben links the idea of messianic recapitulation to the vision the dying supposedly have of their life.\(^ {412}\) The entire past flashes up in every messianic moment. Agamben’s Benjaminian interpretation of Paul is clearly noticeable here.\(^ {413}\) Agamben’s point is that in the messianic time the

\(^{410}\) Ibid., 74.
\(^{411}\) Ibid., 76.
\(^{412}\) Ibid., 77.
\(^{413}\) See Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History.”
past is something that needs to be dealt with. In the time of the now the past regains potentiality.

Now, what does this mean for the subject? What kind of temporality corresponds to the messianic subject? The emphasis of messianic temporality is on the past, but this is related to the end of time. Because time is going to end everyone has to account for their past and the past in general. To understand what this means exactly, we need to return to the issue of potentiality.

In the messianic time, the potential has primacy over the actual. The actual does not disappear, but is no longer more powerful than the potential. Subjectivity is determined by this potentiality. Similarly, the present no longer has primacy over the past. While the present is still the actual, it is marked by its potentiality. This potentiality is the past.

Why is the past the potentiality of the present? In my view this is because for Agamben potentiality is not in the first place – as is the case for Heidegger’s possibility for instance – something that could be, but rather it is something that could have been. The potential is an actuality that could also have been actualized, but wasn’t.

If potentiality is understood in this way, it becomes clear how the messianic now can contain the past. The past is contained in the now as everything that could have been, but isn’t. However, because of the messianic suspension we know that the state of affairs can no longer decide what the present is. Just like a Jew is no longer only and in every way a Jew, the present is no longer necessarily as it is now.

This reorientation of temporality has an incredible political consequence. The present could have been otherwise, so the mistakes of the past are something the present needs to deal with. The people who have
suffered in history become a problem to the now. It is no surprise, then, that Agamben believes that Benjamin was Pauline.414

3.6. World

Let us now move on to the way Pauline subjectivity relates to its world in Agamben’s reading. In his discussion of the hōs mē, Agamben draws the attention to 1 Corinthians 7:21, where Paul claims that one should use one’s factical condition. This is – or so Agamben claims – the attitude messianic life should take towards the world, the law and their conditions.415 Although we tend to understand using the world as an abuse of the world this is not the case for Paul. Rather, use should be understood as opposed to possession. About this Agamben writes:

Use: this is the definition Paul gives to messianic life in the form of the as not.
To live messianically means “to use” klēsis; conversely, messianic klēsis is something to use, not to possess.416

There is an intimate connection between the theory of use and the hōs mē. Agamben bases himself on 1 Corinthians 7:21 in which Paul states that one should use their worldly condition after the messianic vocation. The hōs mē suspends all properties, but factically they remain. According to Agamben’s reading of Paul, these properties, although they have lost their dividing characteristic, can and should still be used. What does this mean?

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In using the word ‘properties’ here, I try to evoke a certain ambiguity. The word ‘property’ can refer to the things that you own as well as the characteristics that you possess. The ownership of both of these are suspended by the messianic vocation and both become a matter of use. This is very counterintuitive, because the word ‘property’ is always used to describe something someone owns. The suspension of both of these meanings of property will be considered in greater detail.

Firstly, the factical characteristics one possesses. About these Agamben writes:

In the as not, in a characteristic gesture, Paul pushes an almost exclusively juridical regulation to its extreme, turning it against the law. What does it actually mean to remain a slave in the form of the as not? Here, the juridical-factual condition invested by the messianic vocation is not negated with regard to juridical consequences that would in turn validate a different or even opposite legal effect in its place, as does the fictio legis. Rather, in the as not, the juridical-factual condition is taken up again and is transposed, while remaining juridically unchanged, to a zone that is neither factual nor juridical, but is subtracted from the law and remains as a place of pure praxis, of simple “use” (“use it rather!”). 418

Agamben uses the example of being a slave here, because it is the vocation which Paul discusses in 1 Corinthians 7:21 when he introduces the concept of use. The worldly condition of being a slave is not changed; it is still factically and juridically valid. However, the factual world and the law themselves are suspended. So, one is still a slave, but the law that makes one a slave is no

417 Agamben notes that this conception of use is the background for the Franciscan’s vow of highest poverty. Here Agamben expressly connects the Franciscan order to the Pauline messianic thought. See ibid., 27.
418 Ibid., 28.
longer valid. What this means is that the juridical domain no longer is the instance that decides what someone is or not. Someone’s being a slave is no longer a fundamental truth about their identity, but rather a practical truth about their situation. That is why a worldly vocation, such as being a slave, becomes a matter of praxis. It is something that is to be used. Worldly vocations are no longer determining for identity, but are characteristics or situations that one can use without being defined by them.

Secondly, the word ‘property’ has the meaning of the things one owns. This is suspended by the ἡσὶν μὲν in a similar manner. Agamben writes:

We may now make better sense of the meaning of the antitheses in verses 30-31: “those buying as not possessing, and those using [chrômenoi] the world as not using it up [katachrômenoi].” They make an explicit reference to property (dominium) under Roman law: ius utendi et abutendi. [...] Paul contrasts messianic usus with dominium; thus, to remain in the calling in the form of the as not means to not ever make the calling an object of ownership, only of use.419

Agamben specifically relates the Pauline theory of use to Roman property law. Agamben claims that Paul explicitly refers to this law. In Roman, law one had the right to use and abuse one’s own property. If something belonged to you, you could use it even to the extent of destroying it in using it. The right one had over one’s property was absolute. The ἡσὶν μὲν separates the right to use (ius utendi) from the right to use up (ius abutendi). After the messianic vocation, one still has the right to use property, but no longer the right to abuse or destroy it. Agamben interprets this in terms of a separation between use and ownership. Things can still be used, but no longer owned. Paul relates this to the world.

419 Ibid., 26.
Not just the things in the world, but the world itself can no longer be owned. How should this be understood?

The roman *ius abutendi* can only be exercised if one has power over something. The word *dominium*, which translates as property, stems from the root of *dominus*, lord. Property, then, meant having lordship over something. The messianic revocation of property, then, affects the claim of power. One no longer has absolute power over what one owns. This can also be applied to the world as such. The entire idea of power – through which the world is structured – needs to be revoked and rethought. Agamben finds this idea expressed in 1 Corinthians 1:27-28. He writes:

Metanomasia realizes the intransigent messianic principle articulated firmly by the apostle, in which those things that are weak and insignificant will, in the days of the Messiah, prevail over those things the world considers to be strong and important (1 Cor. 1:27-28: “But God hath chosen ... the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, ... and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are”).

The messianic revocation is not just a revocation of property, but actually of the principle underlying property: power. Power means in the first place having dominion over something, however it also has the connotation of having an ability. Having an ability or a characteristic also entails having power to do something. After the messianic revocation the traditional view of weakness and power will be overturned. Both weakness and power are categories of the world before the messianic revocation and these categories are overturned from the inside out. The idea of power itself is suspended through the messianic revocation. An example will clarify this: what the world considers to be strong

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420 Ibid., 10.
is the might of kings or rulers, for example. They have power, because they have ownership. They have ownership either over things, such as land or food, which others need, or over certain socio-juridical conditions, such as being a king. The messianic vocation suspends both of these ownerships. Their being a king is no longer important. They are still factically a king, but they have no *ius abutendi*. They no longer own their land or subjects in the traditional way. They can only *use* their kingship. The messianic revocation denies the legitimatization a king has for his power.

How does this affect the world? Although Agamben never gives an explicit, separate definition of his conception of world, it can be argued that Agamben’s use of this term does not pertain to a cosmological idea of the world. In *The Time That Remains*, he uses ‘world’ in one of two ways. Firstly, he uses ‘world’ when referring to a worldview of a certain period. For example, he uses the term classical world to refer to the way the Greeks understood their life world. Secondly, he uses ‘world’ when referring to worldly situations or the things in the world. In this sense, world is used in opposition to messianic. The worldly vocations are revoked by the messianic vocation. Neither of these two meanings have any reality outside of experience of the world. Agamben does not consider the phenomenon of temporality apart from human experience. World denotes the totality of situations and things in the world. How, then, does the messianic revocation of power affect this world?

The Pauline passage on the *hōs mē* may thus conclude with the phrase “*paragei gar to schēma tou kosmou toutou* [for passing away is the figure, the way of being of this world]” (1 Cor. 7:31). In pushing each thing toward itself through the *as not*, the messianic does not simply cancel out this figure, but it makes it
pass, it prepares its end. This is not another figure or another world: it is the passing of the figure of this world.\textsuperscript{421}

The hōs mē cancels out the being of this world. It prepares the world for its end. This should be understood against the background of the suspension of power. This is suspended by the messianic event. The messianic event revokes every worldly vocation. The world can, however, only be understood from the human experience of the world. So, what is suspended is not the world itself, but how people experience the world. The experience of the world is placed under a messianic tension.\textsuperscript{422} The ending of the form of the world, then, entails a reorientation of the experience of the world. It is not the world that changes, but the subject who lives in it. The subject has his claim to the world revoked. The original being of the world, that is ownership of it, is revoked and made to pass. What is left is use.

The question is: how does this messianic use of the world work? As I have shown, the law dominates the world before the messianic event. The law is originally sacred and bound by rituals. When this law is suspended and thereby profaned, what are left of rituals are the rites.\textsuperscript{423} Divorced of their mythological element, however, these rites serve no purpose. These rites, however, can still be used. This use, as Whyte argues, is completely new and non-utilitarian.\textsuperscript{424} The world – and also identity – works the same. After the

\textsuperscript{421} Ibid., 24–25.
messianic event, they have no inherent purpose. They can now be freely used. This is characteristic of form-of-life, which is created by the messianic event. It is no longer subjugated to the law, but rather it uses the law.⁴²⁵

To sum up: what does it mean for a subject to live in the world after the messianic event? In a long, but striking passage Agamben remarks:

The messianic vocation dislocates and, above all, nullifies the entire subject. This is the meaning of Galatians 2:20, “It is no longer I that live [zo ouketi ego], but the Messiah living in me.” He lives in him precisely as the “no longer I,” that dead body of sin we bear within ourselves which is given life through the spirit in the Messiah (Rom. 8:11). The whole of creation was subjected to caducity \textit{(mataiotes)}, the futility of what is lost and decays, but this is why it groans as it awaits redemption (Rom. 8:20-22). The thing in the spirit to correspond with this creature’s continuously lost lament is not a well-formed discourse able to calculate and register loss, but “unspeakable groanings” \textit{(stenagmois alaletois)} (Rom. 8:26). This is why the one who upholds faith in what is lost cannot believe in any identity or worldly \textit{klēsis}. The \textit{as not} is by no means a fiction in the sense intended by Vaihinger or Forberg. It has nothing to do with an ideal. The assimilation to what has been lost and forgotten is absolute: “We are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things” (1 Cor. 4:13). Pauline \textit{klēsis} is a theory of the interrelation between the messianic and the subject, a theory that settles its differences once and for all with presumed identities and ensuing properties. In this sense, that which is not \textit{(ta mē onta)} is stronger than that which is.⁴²⁶

The subject no longer lives factically, but it lives messianically. The subject has lost itself in that it can no longer fall back on its factical conditions for identity. The subject is the one who “upholds faith in what is lost”. The subject accepts


⁴²⁶ Agamben, \textit{The Time That Remains}, 41.
the potentiality of what could have been as equal to the actuality of his social-juridical condition. The world itself is suspended. It can no longer be possessed, but can only be *used*. Because of this complete overturning of the actual a space is created for the ‘filth of the world’.

### 3.7. Community

On the very first page of *The Time That Remains*, Agamben states what is at stake in his book. The problem he ultimately wants to address through reading Saint Paul is how something like a messianic community is possible.\(^{427}\) Although Agamben discusses what happens after the resurrection extensively, he says remarkably little about the messianic community. Agamben makes only one direct remark about the messianic community:

For Paul, the *ekklēsia*, the messianic community, is literally all *klēseis*, all messianic vocations.\(^{428}\)

The messianic community is a community founded on the messianic vocation, which – as we have seen – is actually a revocation of all worldly vocations. The messianic community, then, has to be a community devoid of identity. Let’s take the example of the division between Jew and non-Jew again. Being a Jew is not just an individual identity, it is foremost a community. You are a Jew, because you belong to this community. A community, in turn, is nothing more than a group of individuals who are united by a single, common identity marker, such as their being a Jew. A messianic community, then, seems to be a *contradictio in terminis*, because it denotes a community – a group of people

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\(^{427}\) Ibid., 2.

\(^{428}\) Ibid., 22.
who belong together based on a positive identity – without this identity. A messianic community entails in the first place a rethinking of the concept of community itself.

In the situation under the law, the idea of community was a simple one. It was based on the idea of belonging. The law forced every person to belong to its identity marker. How can one have a community, which is nothing more than a belonging, without identity? For this, Agamben turns to the idea of the fulfillment of the law in Paul. The suspension of the law does not lead to lawlessness. Rather, the suspension of the law leads to the fulfillment of the law in the law of faith.

Paul opposes the law of works, nomos ton ergon, to the law of faith, nomos pisteos. According to Agamben, this opposition is not an opposition between two types of law, but rather a division internal to the law itself. Every law, Agamben claims, has a normative and a promissive aspect. Through a suspension of the normative aspect of the law, the formerly hidden promissive aspect can become apparent and, as a consequence, fulfilled. This promissive aspect is the internal excess of every law or, phrased differently, it is the

430 Agamben, The Coming Community, 67.
432 Agamben, The Time That Remains, 95.
433 Ibid.
remnant of the law. The law of faith, then, is the remnant of the suspended law. To explain this, Agamben turns to the concept of the prelaw.

Prelaw is a sphere defined by legal scholars which precedes written law. It consists of two elements, oath and faith.\(^4^{34}\) The oath or the promise bound someone. Because of the binding character, someone else could have absolute faith in the person who made the oath. This is the basis of the law. Because of this, it is internal to all law. This aspect of the law is still left after the messianic suspension. The messianic law of faith, then, is a non-normative law.\(^4^{35}\)

Belonging to the messianic community, then, means belonging to this non-normative law. Instead of belonging based on a similar identity, messianic life can only belong based on their potential in difference. The messianic community is a community of people who each enact their lives in their own manner and form a community in that they are potentiality.\(^4^{36}\) The messianic community is a community precisely in the fact that each member can decide on the form of their own life. Life can no longer be guided by law, but rather only by life itself. Because of this undetermined nature, it is difficult to give any further characterization of a messianic community. For this reason, Agamben does not develop the messianic community any further in his reading of Paul. He does, however, establish this theme in *The Highest Poverty*, his book on the Franciscan order. Although Agamben only very briefly discusses the Franciscan community in *The Time That Remains*, he does claim that the

\(^{434}\) Ibid., 114.


Franciscan order is based on a messianic understanding of use in Paul. For this reason, I believe Agamben’s discussion of the messianic community in *The Highest Poverty* can also be understood within the framework of *The Time That Remains*. In the following I want to elaborate on an example Agamben gives of a community which comes very close to being messianic, namely the Franciscan order.

Agamben begins *The Highest Poverty* by reflecting on the concept of the rule as it used by monastic orders. Living by a rule does not mean following certain external prescripts, but taking a certain way of living as your own. Life should take on a certain form. Agamben notes that form is a translation of the Greek *typos*. As Agamben states in *The Time That Remains*, a *typos* means taking a certain life of someone in the past and trying to emulate that life. This is exactly what the concept of rule means in the Franciscan interpretation. It is life as an *imitatio Christi*. Living according to a certain form, then, means living life according to an example. About this Agamben writes:

The sense of *forma* here is “example, paradigm,” but the logic of the example is anything but simple and does not coincide with the application of a general law (Agamben 2, pp. 20–24/18–21). *Forma vitae* designates in this sense a way of life that, insofar as it strictly adheres to a form or model from which it cannot be separated, is thus constituted as an example.

The life and the rule it follows can no longer be separated. However, they did not come into being at the same time. The rule needs to exist before it can be followed. Agamben turns to Wittgenstein to explain this point:

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439 Ibid., 107.
440 Ibid., 95.
Starting with Wittgenstein, contemporary thought and more recently philosophers of law have sought to define a peculiar type of norms, the norms called constitutive, which do not prescribe a certain act or regulate a preexisting state of things, but themselves bring into being the action or state of things. The examples Wittgenstein uses are chess pieces, which do not exist before the game, but are constituted by the rules of the game ("The pawn is the sum of the rules for its moves"; Wittgenstein 2, pp. 325–26/327). It is obvious that the execution of a rule of this type, which does not limit itself to prescribing to an agent a certain conduct but produces this conduct, becomes extremely problematic. 441

Rules not only need a community of people who know the rules, but it actually creates them. Just like a chess piece can only exist after the rules of chess exist, the form-of-life that follows a rule can only exist after the rule. The rule constitutes the life following it.

However, there is another important characteristic of living life as following a rule, namely the communality of the rule. One can solitarily follow an example, but following rules requires that other people are at least aware of the rules too. Again, Agamben explains this point by turning to Wittgenstein. Agamben writes:

What is decisive in any case is that the form of life that is in question in the rules is a koinos bios, a common life. Every interpretation of the monastic rules must first of all situate them in this context, from which they cannot be separated. When we ask ourselves about the relation between monks and rules, it is necessary not to forget Wittgenstein’s observation according to which it is not possible to follow a rule privately, because referring to a rule necessarily implies a community and a set of habits. 442

441 Ibid., 71.
442 Ibid., 58.
Following a rule implies a common life. Living by a rule needs a community of people. If no one else is aware of the rules you are following, it becomes a completely fictional endeavor. You can always claim to follow the rules when no one else knows the rules and thus no one is able to check if you are actually following the rules. So, living life as following a rule implies a common life. The communal aspect of the messianic community is located precisely in the fact that people belong to life itself. Messianic life cannot be separated from how it lives. They belong to their manner of living or, in Heideggerian terms, they belong to their enactment. The messianic community, then, is a community without identity that is fully contingent; it only exists of people living following the same example in their life.

3.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, the last of the three Paul readings was discussed. For a third time, I have raised the question of subjectivity in Paul and its effects on temporality, world and community. This time I have done so in in the work of Agamben. Agamben turns to Paul, starting from a problematic relationship between law and life. According to Agamben, contemporary life is characterized by its being dominated by the biopolitics of the sovereign. The sovereign can, through the law, reduce any life to bare life. Agamben’s project is an attempt to think a form-of-life, a life that is irreducible to anything. Agamben finds this form of life in Paul’s messianic thought.

In Agamben’s analysis, the law forces all people into a logic of binary oppositions. Either you are A or you are non-A. There is no third term, nor is there an in-between. In Paul’s terms people are called to the life that they are living. The messianic event intervenes in this situation. The messianic event undoes this claim of totality by the law.
Agamben considers the messianic operation. He finds that in Paul the messianic event works through a suspension of the law. The operative term in this regard is *katargein*. *Katargein* is the deactivation of the law and the conditions of the law. *Katargein* means taking the energy out of something. According to Agamben, this is related to the Aristotelian opposition between act and potentiality.

In Aristotle, there are two forms of potentiality: generic potentiality and what I have called ‘proper’ potentiality. Generic potentiality is the potentiality of the child. The child has the potential to be an adult and when he has actualized this, the potentiality is gone. Actuality exhausts potentiality. This is the form of potentiality on which the law relies. Proper potentiality, on the other hand, is the potentiality involved in having a capacity. It is the potentiality of the craftsman. Even when a craftsman is not performing his craft, he still retains the potential to do so. Similarly, his potential is also not exhausted in his craft. A potter can make a second pot. His potential to do so is not exhausted with the first one. This ‘proper’ potentiality is the potentiality of the human being and it is also the potentiality to which the law is ‘restored’ by the messianic event.

The messianic event suspends the law by revoking every calling. Rather than destroying identity, every identity remains, but at the same time regains a proper potentiality. After the messianic event identity is no longer exhaustive. Rather, every subject always has an inexhaustible remnant. This remnant is that core of potentiality that always remains.

The messianic subject, then, is marked by two conditions: non-identity and contingency. No single identity marker can ever exhaust or define the subject. Even though it still has identity markers, it deals with them in a radically different way. It uses and enacts them when it needs to, but the
messianic subject cannot be reduced to it. It is the identity ḥōs me. Similarly, because the messianic subject does not have a generic potentiality, it does not have a single fulfillment. There is no necessary way for it to be. It is unstructured by any external law or entity. It is, in this sense, contingent.

This messianic element also manifests itself in the temporality, world and community of the subject. Each of these three gain a radically new form for the messianic subject. Because the messianic subject lives in messianic time, every moment is pregnant with the full past. The messianic subject no longer lives solely in the present, but it also carries with it the potentiality of the past. Through this enactment of its life in potentiality, messianic life takes a new attitude towards the world. Not only does it enact its own life differently, but it also relates to the world surrounding it differently. Messianic life is no longer defined by its identity, but it can use it. Messianic life can play in the world and form a community with other messianic subjects based on their contingency and non-identity.

In this chapter, we have seen how Agamben discovers a form of subjectivity in Paul’s letters that lives its own potentiality. It lives the potentiality of itself, the past and the world. In the final chapter, I will look at all three Paul interpretations and evaluate them in relation to the others and to Paul himself.
Chapter 4: Paul. The contours of subjectivity

4.1. Introduction

In the past three chapters, I have engaged Heidegger’s, Badiou’s and Agamben’s readings of the letters of Saint Paul. In these readings, I have focused on the question of how these philosophers develop a new account of subjectivity through their respective readings of Paul. In this chapter, I want to compare the three accounts of Pauline subjectivity I have discussed in this dissertation and outline some contours of a Pauline account of subjectivity. I will do this by moving away from the author-based approach of the previous three chapters. Instead I will approach Pauline subjectivity starting from the similarities between the three analyses I discussed in the previous three chapters. This attempt is guided by three crucial insights from the previous chapters.

Firstly, it is clear that the letters of Paul are a fertile ground for a philosophical theory of subjectivity. Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben all develop an account of subjectivity through their reading of Paul and – although their readings are disparate – they all find that Pauline subjectivity is characterized by both contingency and non-identity. Because these two characteristics are common to all three philosophers, I will take these as my starting point in developing my overarching account of Pauline subjectivity.

Secondly, the readings of Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben are very different from one another, especially with regards to their philosophical backgrounds and the terminology they employ. This makes it all the more interesting that the readings also complement each other to a large extent.
Heidegger, for example, does not develop any explicit ontology through Paul, whereas this is clearly present in Badiou and Agamben. Recall that I use the terms anthropological and ontological in very specific ways in this dissertation. Both refer to ways in which Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben understand Paul’s notion of the world and specifically the change in the world of which Paul speaks. The anthropological understanding means understanding the change in the world solely in terms of a change in the subject, whereas the ontological understanding means seeing the transformation of the world about which Paul speaks as an actual transformation of the world itself. So, when I say that Heidegger does not develop an explicit ontology, I mean that Heidegger only discusses the change in the world in terms of the change it effects in the subject. In turn, Badiou does not seem to pay proper attention to the themes of difference and enactment in Paul, unlike both Heidegger and Agamben. As I will show, a complementary reading leads to an account of Pauline subjectivity, which is much more robust than any of the three individual accounts.

As I have said, in the following I will interpret these three readings in a complementary, but critical way. In order to do this, I will follow the basic scheme of the previous three chapters. After this introduction, I will discuss the figure of Paul the author (4.2). Thereafter, I will move on to the discussion of subjectivity. I will consider Pauline subjectivity and its two characteristics of contingency and non-identity (4.3). Then I will discuss how this subjectivity affects the three main themes of temporality (4.4), world (4.5) and community (4.6). Finally, I will give an account of Pauline subjectivity and make some suggestions for possible further research (4.7).

4.2. Paul
Why is the figure of Paul important for a philosophical analysis of Pauline subjectivity? As I have noted before, the number of letters Paul wrote is not undisputed. When discussing Paul, it is important to distinguish whether one is talking about the historical Paul, who wrote seven letters or what I call ‘Paul the author-position’, who wrote fourteen letters. This is obviously important for philological reasons, but it is my contention that this decision is also philosophically relevant.

Heidegger was – in his reading of Paul – in discussion with the historical-critical approach. Even though Heidegger rejected the reigning idea that this approach could lead to a final understanding of Paul’s letters, he actively engages with the scholarship of his day. He specifically addresses the question of Pauline authorship with regards to the second letter to the Thessalonians. By engaging with this discussion, Heidegger clearly sticks to a reading of the historical Paul.

For Heidegger, there is a philosophical reason to do this. He is interested in primordial Christianity, that is, the earliest – and according to Heidegger most original – historical expression of Christianity. Because of this he is interested in the earliest expression of Christian life. He finds this in Paul’s two letters to the Thessalonians. Heidegger’s main engagement with Paul is through a full reading of these two letters as evidenced by the appendix.

A similar reading of Galatians precedes the readings of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, because in this reading Heidegger finds Paul’s self-

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444 Heidegger, The Phenomenology of Religious Life, 75.
understanding. Interestingly enough, however, some of the key moments of Heidegger’s reading of Paul are not supported by the Thessalonian letters, but rather by the two letters to the Corinthians. The letter to the Romans is almost completely absent from Heidegger’s engagement with Paul.

Similarly, Badiou also limits himself to the historical Paul. Badiou’s interest in Paul is entirely subjective, that is, he is interested in Paul as a thinker of the subject and as an example of a subject. Because of this emphasis on the subjective nature of Paul, Badiou only uses the letters that are authentic according to New Testament scholarship, namely Romans, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians and Philippians.

Of these six letters which Badiou confines himself to, he only actually uses four: Romans, Galatians and 1 and 2 Corinthians. Badiou mentions both 1 Thessalonians and Philippians only once. With the remaining four letters, Badiou does not discuss periscopes, but rather he uses verses or even phrases to support his reading of Paul. Because of this approach, Badiou’s reading is one-sided and slightly opportunistic. Badiou’s Paul is a theorist of the subjectivity stemming from the event and nothing more.

Agamben distinguishes himself from the other two philosophers by his engagement not with the historical Paul, but with Paul the author-figure. As I have already argued, Agamben is not particularly interested in Paul as an historical figure, but rather in Paul as a founder of Western thought. Agamben is interested in the meaning of the texts and the influence that these texts had on contemporary Western thought and life. Agamben uses almost all of Paul’s letters in some way. Agamben’s procedure is that he explains the first ten words of the letter to the Romans by taking recourse to other Pauline letters.

445 Even though – as we have seen - Paul is strictly speaking not a subject for Badiou, he still has all the characteristics of a subject.
The letters that Agamben discusses at the crucial moments in his argumentation are Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians. Because of this procedure, Agamben’s reading is partial, like Badiou’s reading. The difference is, however, that Badiou takes verses that fit his theory, while Agamben uses texts that explain the Pauline concepts he employs. Agamben does not shy away from the texts in Paul’s oeuvre which engage with his concepts even if these texts problematize Agamben’s analysis.

One of the differences between Heidegger and Badiou on the one hand and Agamben on the other is that the former two both hardly discuss concrete, political community explicitly in reading Paul, while – by his own admission – this is the most important question for Agamben. I will not go so far as to say that this difference is caused by the differences in which Paul they discuss, but I will say that the focus on the author-position Paul, who has always been invoked to build and legitimize multiple religious communities, enables Agamben to better address this problem.

4.3. Subjectivity

In the course of the previous three chapters, I have developed an account of Pauline subjectivity in Heidegger’s, Badiou’s and Agamben’s readings of Paul. In these chapters, I have already hinted at a remarkable similarity between the three readings, namely they each find a form of subjectivity marked by contingency and non-identity. As I have defined it in the introduction, non-identity denotes the fact that Pauline subjectivity is not an identity marker that is applied to a person or community, but rather that it is a transformation in subjectivity which revokes every identity. Contingency denotes both the fact that one has to accept the insecurity of life, as well as the idea that life is no longer ruled by necessity. I will now examine my claim that these three reading
are similar in greater detail and discuss how Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben understand Pauline subjectivity in terms of non-identity and contingency.

Heidegger begins his account of Pauline subjectivity by defining this transformed subjectivity as a having-become. The Christians have become something else and they have knowledge of this transformation. This transformation can only be understood in relation to the impending parousia. The fact that something will happen soon which will change everything, makes it necessary for life to be lived differently. Heidegger is very careful not to say anything about the nature of the parousia or the change it inaugurates. Rather, he has an exclusive focus on what the proclamation that the parousia will come does to subjectivity. There are, Heidegger argues, two reactions to this proclamation: one can ignore it and keep on living in the same way or one can accept it and have one’s life be transformed. This transformation means accepting the radical insecurity of the parousia. One does not know exactly when it will come. Accepting it means living this insecurity.

Heidegger explains the transformation in terms of a change in temporality and in a change of how one enacts one’s life in the world. Although I will discuss these two changes separately as consequences of the transformation of subjectivity, it is good to note that for Heidegger they are not afterthoughts to the change in subjectivity, but rather constitutive for it.

The temporal structure of Pauline subjectivity is an obstinate waiting for the parousia. This means that Pauline subjectivity actively lives in the insecurity of life and does not sit around and wait for the end. Because Pauline subjectivity lives this radical insecurity of life, it is characterized by contingency. The transformation in subjectivity means accepting that not everything can be controlled and that some things are just given. In Heidegger’s analysis a form of contingency, which is opposed to security,
marks Pauline subjectivity. Security, in this regard, is factical life’s tendency to interpret everything as predictable and controllable.

The operative word in the Pauline enactment of the world is *ta mē onta*, the things which are not. The factical relations of life have become as not for Pauline subjectivity. This is also the case for the relations to the self-world. The relations one has to one’s own conditions are also changed through the transformation of subjectivity. All these relations are enacted *hōs mē*, as not. What this means is that the way Pauline subjectivity relates to its own factical conditions is changed. These conditions are not annulled, but lived as their negations. So, Pauline subjectivity lives its facticity – such as being a Jew, being married, being a slave – in such a way that it accepts that these conditions are not what determine subjectivity. Factual life enacts these conditions as determining for it, but Pauline subjectivity lives them as not being the entire story.

What is clear, however, is that Pauline subjectivity lives its factical conditions under the condition of the not. This means that no condition is determinative for it. The consequence of this is that the principle of identity, as it is found in factual life, is not valid for it. Heidegger introduces the concept of the *hōs mē* in his reading of Paul. He does not, however, develop this to a great extent. Agamben makes his point of non-identity, however, partially based on Heidegger’s interpretation of the *hōs mē*. So, even though Heidegger does not make this point explicitly, a consequence of his analysis of the *hōs mē* as characteristic for Pauline subjectivity is that it is not defined by any positive identity marker. Rather, identity itself has to be enacted as not.

Badiou’s analysis of Pauline subjectivity starts with an exploration of ontology. The subject is, in Badiou’s terms, the local configuration of the event. Pauline subjectivity, then, is that form of subjectivity that has been
created by the event of the resurrection. It is interesting to note that for Badiou the subject is constituted by the event. Although obviously the human being who becomes a Pauline subject pre-exists the event, for Badiou the emergence of the Pauline subject is strictly speaking not a matter of a transformation of one form of subjectivity to another. Rather, the human being becomes a subject for the first time thanks to the event. This is not just a semantic distinction, but it clarifies one of the defining characteristics of the Pauline subject according to Badiou. Pauline subjectivity is a radically new form of life. It is new, because it belongs to the event, which is a novel intrusion into ontology.

Like every event, the resurrection is — strictly speaking — nothing. It is not part of being. Because of this, it can instate a new truth. The truth of the resurrection is that death has been conquered. Death, Badiou emphasizes, is in Paul a way of thinking, just like life is. Death denotes the way of the flesh, sin, desire, law and ultimately being. Life lived as death is life as automatism. Death is that law which binds life. It is a life of necessity in which everything falls under the control of the one in power. The resurrection overcomes precisely this. In Badiou’s reading of Paul the resurrection is the freedom of the life of desire.

The subject of the resurrection lives according to the interesting structure of the “not ... but”. It lives life simultaneously according to life and death. It tries to reject the life of death and live according to life, but through its human desires it is continually pulled towards the life of death. Badiou, then, sketches an interesting picture of Pauline subjectivity. It is a subjectivity that is marked by the struggle between its desires and a life freed from them.

This Pauline subjectivity has two main characteristics: non-identity and contingency. According to Badiou, the resurrection is universal. It is open to all regardless of any prior identity or qualifications. This means that the subject
stemming from it does not have any prior identity that matters for its subjectivity. In this sense, Badiou claims, the subject is itself universal. Even though human beings who become subjects have identities, this is a matter of indifference for their subjectivity. Identity is dissolved into the universal subjectivity of the resurrection. Similarly, because the Pauline subject does not depend on any prior condition, it is contingent. It is – in so far as it lives the path of life – not structured by any law or necessity.

Agamben’s analysis of Pauline subjectivity is focused on the messianic. According to Agamben, Paul is the thinker of the messianic. The messianic is itself an intervention in the relationship of life and law. In Agamben’s reading of Paul the law is the instance that divides people. This division is exhaustive. It divides people into groups based on their vocation. People are called to being something. The law does not allow for any transgression of this division. This means that people are nothing more than the collection of their identity markers and groups are nothing more than a collection of individuals. Pauline subjectivity overcomes this division through its messianic nature.

Pauline subjectivity is instated by the revocation of every vocation by the messianic event. In this revocation the law is suspended. The law is depowered and the divisions it instates are no longer valid. This opens a space for Pauline subjectivity. Interestingly enough, Agamben’s analysis of potentiality hinges more on Aristotle than on Paul. He does, however, take the idea of the suspension of potentiality from Paul. Agamben claims – unconvincingly, as I have argued – that Paul was aware of and invoked the Aristotelian opposition between dynamis and energeia in his analysis of the messianic revocation. According to Agamben’s reading of Paul, what is suspended is the actuality of the law. The law and the conditions it instates are
returned to their potentiality. This leads to the introduction of a remnant into every vocation. When the actuality of the law is suspended, a core of pure potentiality remains in each and every vocation. This form of potentiality is opposed to the generic potentiality that the law allows. Generic potentiality is that potentiality which is exhausted in its fulfillment. Aristotle’s example is the child who is potentially an adult. This potentiality can be actualized or not, but it can only be actualized in this way. The Pauline subject is the subject characterized by this pure, non-generic potentiality.

Because of the primacy of potentiality of Pauline subjectivity, it is non-identitarian and contingent. Through the messianic suspension of the law, the factual conditions – Agamben uses the Heideggerian term factical in this context – the defining character of identity markers is suspended. The Pauline subject is still factically called to certain social-juridical conditions, but these conditions no longer exhaust it. It can no longer be reduced to any single or even any collection of identities.

Pauline subjectivity is contingent by virtue of its remnant of potentiality. Non-messianic life is a life of actuality and its corresponding generic potentiality. This form of life can only be necessary. Either it is something actually or it is something potentially. Life can only reach its predetermined goal or die trying. The Pauline subject always has a remnant of potentiality. It is not bound by its actual conditions, nor is its potential tied to a specific fulfillment.

Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben each arrive at the analysis of Pauline subjectivity in terms of contingency and non-identity based on different Pauline texts, starting from different backgrounds and through different philosophical concepts. I will consider the two aspects of Pauline subjectivity – non-identity
and contingency – separately and pose the question of whether these three philosophers are actually talking about the same thing.

Firstly, I will discuss non-identity. Admittedly this aspect of subjectivity is less present in Heidegger. The non-identitarian nature of Pauline subjectivity, however, is the logical consequence of his analysis. Heidegger argues that the relations to the self-world should be enacted as not. They should be lived in such a way that they are no longer the final determination about the self. It is not a stretch to argue that one could apply this to the issue of identity. Identity itself is then enacted as not. No identity can be determinate for a person. Badiou focuses on the novelty of Pauline subjectivity. According to Badiou, subjectivity exists independent of any identity. It does not need a prior identity, nor is it structured by a new identity. Agamben is very much a further development of Heidegger in this regard. The messianic revocation, of which living life through the ἡσυχαίρε is a consequence, revokes every identity claim. Even though Agamben is heavily reliant on Aristotle, he gives an interesting and nuanced account of non-identity.

Heidegger and Agamben are very close to each other in their analysis of non-identity. Agamben takes up Heidegger’s entire argument and even his vocabulary of facticity and develops it. Badiou, however, clearly takes a different approach. All three philosophers agree that Pauline subjectivity is not bound to any form of prior identity, nor that it is itself a new identity in the traditional sense. Pauline subjectivity avoids any form of essentialism about personhood. The philosophers differ, however, in their valuation of factually existing identity. Heidegger and Agamben argue that factually existing identity is pushed towards its own negation. That is: it still exists, but it is lived differently. Badiou, on the other hand, argues that prior identity is a matter of indifference for the Pauline subject. It is a new, universal subject which only
relates itself to its prior identity through the "not ... but". The pre-existing, factical identity is something which drags the Pauline subject away from its new, universal life and which needs to be overcome. For Badiou, then, the prior identities are at best a matter of indifference and at worst a hindrance to the work that the subject needs to do. For Agamben and Heidegger, on the other hand, factical identity is the material from which the Pauline subject is construed.

In my view, Badiou's approach to Paul has certain drawbacks. Badiou focuses on the annulment of identity which can definitely be found in Paul — Badiou's favorite Gal 3:28 is a good example of this — but he does not see the fact that Paul plays an intricate and nuanced game with identity. Paul characterized himself as a Jew, Greek and Roman at the same time and used these identities as necessary. As 1 Corinthians 7:19-21 shows, identity is something about which you should not care, but which you should use if possible. Heidegger and especially Agamben understand this point correctly. In Paul, there is no annulment of a prior identity, but rather a re-appropriation of it in a new life.

Secondly, let us consider the issue of contingency. For Heidegger, Pauline subjectivity is marked by contingency, because it lives and accepts the radical insecurity of life. This is opposed to the denial of insecurity of factical life. In Badiou's analysis, the Pauline subject is divided between life and death. Death is the rule of law. It is that which binds desire to its object. A life of death is marked by necessity, because it cannot do anything except follow its desire. Pauline subjectivity still lives this, but tries to overcome it through the

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446 For an extensive study on Paul's identity, see: Breton, A Radical Philosophy of Saint Paul; and Ben Witherington III, The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2001).
“not ... but”. It still has desires, but it is liberated from it by the event, which happens contingently. The Pauline subject is contingent in that it is a configuration of an event that happens contingently and it is contingent in that it is liberated from the necessity of desire. Agamben similarly analyses factual life as being bound by law. It lives according to the generic potentiality allowed by the law. It is necessary that it either actualizes this or perishes. The messianic potentiality of Pauline subjectivity releases it from this law of necessity.

Although all three thinkers develop an account of contingency based in their reinterpretation of subjectivity through Paul, it cannot be said that they are the same. Rather, there are two distinct accounts of contingency at work here. The first account is found in Heidegger and Badiou. This form of contingency is related to the Pauline idea of calling. In this account, contingency is opposed to the attempt of factual life to control all aspects of its existence. In Badiou's terminology this contingency is found in the contingency of the event. The event happens contingently. It does not have any necessity. It is a pure, unconditioned happening. Pauline contingency, then, is a surrendering of oneself to the givenness of life. The second account of contingency is found in Agamben and again in Badiou. Here contingency is understood through the Pauline idea of kosmos. They both understand Pauline contingency against the necessity of the law, which structures life. The law, in some way or another, tries to force life to follow its path. Contingency, then, is the liberation from this necessary law. This contingency can be thematized as freedom.

These three analyses of Pauline subjectivity lead to two distinct accounts of contingency. On the one hand, contingency as an acceptation of the givenness in reality and on the other hand, contingency as the freedom from being bound by necessity. The former account is the more traditional,
philosophical account of contingency. It is the idea that things could have been otherwise. The idea of contingency as freedom is slightly different. This form of contingency is aimed at overcoming the necessity and status quo of the law. It is a rejection of how things are. How can these two — acceptation and rejection of the order of things — be rhymed?

Badiou, and to a lesser extent Agamben, have an answer for this. The Pauline subject accepts the fact that its transformation is contingent. It did not choose when, how or why it happened. For Badiou, this is very clear through his exposition of the event and especially his analysis of Paul’s Damascene experience. Agamben is more ambiguous in this regard, because he does not explicitly articulate a theory of the event. It is clear in Agamben, however, that the messianic revocation is not something that happens by virtue of the human’s activity. It simply has to accept what is happening to it. This transformation of subjectivity tasks the newborn subject with, in Badiou’s terms, the work of the event. It has to instate a new situation based on what happened to it, which is open to all. It does this by overcoming the law.

Both Agamben and Badiou argue that Pauline subjectivity entails an overcoming of the law. Their views on the law and the way in which it is consequently overcome, however, differ greatly. Badiou equates the law with sin, desire and death. The law binds the human being to its desire. Sinful life is a life of necessity. For Badiou, this is related to ontology and especially to the state’s control over ontology. The state decides what is, which entities are allowed and, through the law, it decides on the object to which human life is bound in desire.

The state and the law sustain themselves on a logic of finitude. Here Badiou articulates an interesting criticism on Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian philosophy. According to Badiou, the logic of finitude supports
the ontological solidification of the state. Death is the necessary end of every life. The human being is thereby bound to it and to an idea of necessity. Where for the Heidegger of Being and Time, who can be said to be the founder of the philosophy of finitude, death is guarantor of life being fundamentally possibility and a matter of one’s own free design, Badiou interprets death as precisely that instance which binds life. The possibility of life – although Badiou does not use this terminology, it is still fitting – lies precisely in the overcoming of death.

Agamben’s view of the law is decisively different. Agamben sees the law as the principle of division. The sovereign instates this law. It is that instance which decides upon identity and belonging. Belonging is the most basic ontological category. It is the essentialistic decision of what someone is. It does this through employing the generic potentiality. Through employing this generic potentiality, the law only allows for something to either actualize in a specific way or perish.

For both Badiou and Agamben, the law is the instrument of the one in power, the state for Badiou, the sovereign for Agamben. Furthermore, for both the law has an ontological dimension in that it decides on what things and people are. To make this point, Agamben uses the Aristotelian language of potentiality and Badiou uses a vocabulary of death and desire. For Badiou, life is bound to necessity. The law solidifies its desires, thereby giving it two options: following that desire or death. For Agamben, life is also bound by necessity. The law solidifies its potentiality, thereby giving it two options: actualizing that potentiality or death. Badiou’s and Agamben’s analyses of the law are, apart from their registers, very similar. The difference in register does have one important consequence, namely that it leads them to propose very
different solutions. Badiou’s vocabulary of death, leads to life as the counter figure, whereas Agamben turns to messianic potentiality.

Badiou’s path of life is an overcoming of death. It is a path marked by contingency and non-identity and, because it rejects the logic of finitude, it is infinite. It relates to the path of death through a complete rejection of it. Life and death form a complete opposition for Badiou. This opposition, then, internally divides the Pauline subject. Agamben’s messianic potentiality is not a rejection of generic potentiality, but rather a re-interpretation of it. This leads Agamben to develop two distinct forms of potentiality. The divide between these two forms of potentiality is internal to the concept itself. As was the case for their respective ontologies, again the difference between Badiou and Agamben lies in the distinction between transcendence and immanence. Badiou’s solution to the problem of the law is transcendent. It needs an event to intervene. Agamben, on the other hand, thinks this in an immanent way. The law is suspended from inside itself. The consequence of this is that Badiou’s Pauline subject is a transcendent subject, whereas Agamben’s is a subject of immanence.

So, even though the three philosophical accounts of Pauline subjectivity are not the same, they have many important similarities. It is clear, however, that Pauline subjectivity is, at least in some way, characterized by non-identity and contingency. Each of the three accounts has its strengths and weaknesses. A synthesis of these three readings can emphasize the strengths and negate the weaknesses.

With regards to the non-identity, Agamben gives the strongest account. He gives an explicit analysis of non-identity – about which Heidegger is less explicit – which also accounts for the fact that, something which Badiou ignores, identity still matters in some way to the people who are involved in
this. Agamben's argument for overcoming identity is also much more substantial. This non-identity is supported, however, by an ontology and a theory of the event, which – as I have shown – Agamben is lacking.

Regarding the contingency of Pauline subjectivity, these three philosophers develop the account of contingency in two directions, namely contingency as acceptation of the givenness of factual life and contingency as freedom from necessity. As Badiou makes clear, these two accounts can easily and fully exist in unison. Heidegger and Badiou's accounts of givenness are highly similar. Heidegger stresses the insecurity of life, whereas Badiou stresses the unpredictability of the event. While both rely on very different ontologies, they agree that life is inherently contingent. Being a Christian subject depends on accepting a contingent event, the resurrection for Badiou and the parousia for Heidegger.

The other concept of contingency, contingency as freedom, depends heavily on the analysis of necessity. Both Badiou and Agamben agree that the law instates necessity. One escapes through life and the other through potentiality. The strength of Badiou's account lies in the fact that he sees that overcoming the law is not simple. Even when it has been overcome ontologically, it can still be difficult for the subject to completely separate itself from it. Agamben's view seems to imply that once the law has been suspended, generic potentiality is gone. Although this is ontologically true, it might not be directly lived like that. Ironically enough – seeing as it was the other way around with regards to identity – Badiou seems to be the one to understand that a life prior to the transformation of subjectivity still affects the subject.

Badiou fails, however, to account for the ontological change that happens within the Pauline subject. To be sure, Badiou's Pauline subject is the consequence of an intervention in ontology, but it is not itself changed in this
way. The event interrupts ontology and the subject faithfully testifies to the event, but the event itself does not intervene in the ‘ontological basis’ of the subject. This makes becoming a subject a reaction to a situation for Badiou. For Agamben, on the other hand, there is a messianic transformation in the subject itself. Agamben’s account is much more powerful, because it allows someone to account for the transformation of subjectivity, which does not have to fall back on voluntarism. It is my contention that Badiou and Agamben each highlight an important aspect of Pauline subjectivity, namely that the transformation is not of one’s own making or choice and that this leads the subject to be in a struggle with its old life in relation to the new, transformed life.

So, what can be said about Pauline subjectivity? The philosophical account of subjectivity we have found in Paul is a transformed subjectivity. This transformation is effected through a transformation in ontology. The everyday order of the world, in which there is only room for being and actuality, is shaken up by the event. This event, which is in Paul’s case the arrival, death, resurrection and impending return of Jesus Messiah, interrupts being. It introduces non-being into the world and thereby over turns ontology, the law and the politics of actuality.

The subject, which is formed through this event, is contingent and non-identitarian. It still has factual identity, but it is no longer defined by it. In this way, it avoids any politics of identity. The subject’s potential always supersedes every actuality. Furthermore, it is contingent in a dual sense. It is contingent in that it accepts that it cannot control reality. It is no longer the master of nature, which the modern, non-Pauline subject thought it was. It is also contingent in that it gains a radical freedom against ontology and the law. It is no longer tied down to an external necessity, either in the form of a generic
potentiality or by the fixing of its desires in an object mandated by an external entity.

I will now turn to the three concepts of temporality, world and community and thematize how these three are affected by the transformation of subjectivity. Although this account of subjectivity definitely affects a myriad of other concepts, such as personhood, cognition and ethics, these three are the most important. They are – for Paul and his contemporary interlocutors – not just epiphenomena, but fundamental for Pauline subjectivity. The transformation of subjectivity through an intervention in ontology is also at the same time a transformation of temporality, community and the world.

4.4. Temporality

The first of the three themes I will discuss is temporality. In the analyses of all three philosophers, Pauline subjectivity has an important temporal structure. How this is the case, however, differs for each of the three philosophers. I have already mentioned that the shift in temporality inseparable from the transformation of subjectivity for Heidegger. One of his main theses in reading Paul is precisely that primordial Christianity, i.e. Pauline subjectivity, lives temporality as such. Everyday life, Heidegger argues, enacts temporality chronologically. It sees time as the succession of equivalent, discrete moments. Pauline subjectivity is transformed by the parousia of which the moment when it will come cannot be understood in chronological time. Rather, Pauline subjectivity enacts temporality kairoslogically. This means that it accepts the inherent insecurity of the future and obstinately waits for the parousia to come. It is waiting for the shape of the world to pass, while still fully living in it.

Because Badiou does not discuss temporality, it does not seem to be important for him. As I have shown, however, it is actually important for his
analysis. In *Being and Event*, however, Badiou explains the temporal character of the subject through forcing. Forcing is the subject’s introduction of the event into the now. The subject presents the present in such a way that the event has taken place and that its effects have already been established. Through this act the subject empowers the event. The temporal structure of the subject is, then, that its work follows the future anterior. It presents the state of affairs it wants as already having taken place. In Pauline subjectivity, this structure can also be found in that it has to effectuate the resurrection in the present.

Agamben’s account of temporality is, like was the case for Heidegger, central to his understanding of Paul. Agamben repeatedly stresses the fact that one can only understand the messianic through its temporality. Messianic time is the time that time needs to come to an end. It is time as it is ending. Every now in messianic time exists in relation to two moments, resurrection and *parousia*. One moment begins messianic time and the other ends it. Temporality becomes messianic through the division. The messianic event divides chronological time. Time is divided and this introduces a remnant into every moment through the now familiar procedure of suspension. This remnant is the fact that time is ending and that thereby every moment is related to the *parousia*, which will end time, and the resurrection, which divided time.

Now, what can be said about the temporality of Pauline subjectivity? First of all, for Badiou and Heidegger temporality is purely tied to subjectivity, whereas for Agamben there is a cosmological element to temporality. In Agamben’s analysis, time itself is divided and the subject deals with the consequences of this. As has become clear, Heidegger is solely interested in an anthropological reading of Paul and for Badiou temporality is nothing external to the subject. Agamben’s account is in my view more complete. I have already argued that the transformation of subjectivity also entails a transformation of
ontology. Opposed to Badiou, I would argue that there is a strong relation between being and time, especially if one needs a theory of an event that intervenes in ontology and thereby history.

Instead of opposing Heidegger and Agamben against Badiou again and then arguing that the former account has more merit because they actually give an account of temporality in Paul, I want to immediately move on to a synthesis. It is my contention that each of the three philosophers shows an important aspect of Pauline temporality.

Heidegger gives an account of the future-orientedness of Pauline subjectivity. Its temporality is completely determined by its living towards an impending end. This makes its life contingent and confronts the subject with an open future, which it needs to face in obstinate waiting. Heidegger does not see that this new form of life is established by the past or that it changes the present. The change in the present is only an after effect of the impending future. The strength of Heidegger’s view is that he can think the radical contingency of Pauline subjectivity.

Badiou does not focus on the future or the past. The past is only important for the event and the future is only a design for the present based on the event. Even hope is just the desire for the resurrection to effect a lasting change on the world. The temporality of Pauline subjectivity is its power to alter the present based on the event by presenting the future in such a way that the event has taken its effect there. It is a utopian design. The strength of Badiou’s approach is clear. It lends an incredible power to change the status quo to Pauline subjectivity. The problem, however, is that this power has no basis. Badiou lacks an – although Badiou would never use this word in this context – ontological foundation for the future, which the event wants to
establish, nor can Badiou account for how the past event can still be active in the present except for 'because people say so'.

Agamben’s division of temporality relies on past, present and future. Agamben gives an account of temporality that has been changed by a past event and is heading towards its impending end in the future. Agamben, however, over-emphasizes the past. While it is admirable that he wants to task Pauline subjectivity with the responsibility for and of the past, he ultimately lacks the means to do so. The past comes back for Pauline subjectivity as a real possibility, but there is essentially no reason for Pauline subjectivity to enact this in the present. Agamben wants the messianic subject to be responsible for the past, but the past ends up being nothing more than a potential. This could be solved by adopting a similar present-oriented future anterior as Badiou has.

What form does Pauline temporality take when these three accounts are unified? It is a form of temporality that has a new relationship to the past, present and future. The past informs the present as a potential. The contingency Pauline subjectivity accepts means that things could have been differently. Pauline subjectivity has the responsibility to enact that, which never was, but could have been. Pauline subjectivity gains this structure because it has been transformed by a past event, which it continually brings with it into the present.

Pauline subjectivity should not just try to bring about any and every potentiality that never was. Rather, its activity is informed by a future design. This is the state of affairs that will be if the entire world would be transformed by the event that transformed subjectivity. Pauline subjectivity tries to enact this state of affairs. Its making present of the past follows this design. This is the way it relates to the present.

The future, finally, is the liberation from necessity and the law. Because every moment is lived towards an impending end of which the exact
moment is unclear, the future is contingent. Or, in terms of Pauline subjectivity’s relation to the past and present, the future is something that it needs to bring about. The impending end is the end of the form of the world, the way the world is now and which Pauline subjectivity tries to overcome. It tries to overcome this by designing a future world – or following a design, such as the kingdom of God – and trying to bring that design to pass in the present. It does this by repowering the past situations that never were.

So, Pauline subjectivity entails a re-interpretation of the past, present and future. Each is different, but each is necessary in its overarching project of overcoming the current, modern, metaphysical order of things. The political potential of Pauline subjectivity lies precisely in its temporality.

4.5. World

The second of the three concepts is world. The transformation of ontology and subjectivity also entails a shift in the world, both in the world itself and in Pauline subjectivity’s relation to it. For Heidegger, the world consists of self-world, with-world and surrounding world. I have already discussed how Heidegger reinterprets Pauline subjectivity’s relationship to its self-world, namely through non-identity. What happens to the relationship to what could be called the external world?

Again Heidegger stresses that what is changed are not the content or the relation, but only the enactment. As I have mentioned before, Heidegger has an anthropological reading of Paul. He does not seem to be interested in the cosmological or ontological aspects of Paul’s proclamation. In this case, this means that Heidegger only looks at the way subjectivity relates to the world and not the world itself.
Now, what happens to the way Pauline subjectivity enacts the world? The key to this is the ἑος μῆ. Pauline subjectivity enacts all its relations ἑος μῆ, as if not. Every relation Pauline subjectivity has to the world must be lived in the understanding that there are different ways of enacting it. That is: all relations should be enacted in their radical contingency. They should be lived with the realization that they could have been otherwise. This is opposed to the factical idea that accepts only a single form of enactment and for which its world is the center of the entire universe. The world should be enacted in the acceptation that the present form of the world will pass away.

For Badiou, the transformation of the world is ‘ontological’, which has a ‘subjective’ consequence. In Badiou’s terminology, world is essentially the order of the world. The order of the world, which corresponds, to the pre-Pauline way of life is the order of the Jew and the Greek. The Jew and the Greek, each in their own way, exert mastery over the world. Everything has its proper place. This is what Badiou calls the state of the situation. It is the solidification of ontology. Only what is, belongs. The event of the resurrection undoes this logic. It introduces a new element into ontology, which cannot be subsumed by the state. Pauline subjectivity, being a division, lives the world through the “not ... but”. It denies the logic of the old world in which everything has a place and tries to create a world where this logic is undone. In the eyes of the old world, Pauline subjectivity is its refuge. Pauline subjectivity treats the world as if this logic, which relies on necessary places, no longer exists. It lives between the world and the event trying to open a space for contingency.

In Agamben’s reading of Paul, the world plays a complex role. Like Badiou, Agamben does not discuss the concept of the world in great detail. The world, in Agamben’s reading of Paul, denotes the situation under the law that
has not been suspended by the messianic yet. The suspension of the law, then, is also a suspension of the world. The conditions the law imposes have been suspended through the $hōs mē$. Similar to Heidegger, the $hōs mē$ affects one's own identity as well as the way Pauline subjectivity relates to the world. Agamben, however, takes a decidedly different approach than Heidegger.

The world itself and specifically the things that the world deems important are suspended. They should be lived $hōs mē$. For Agamben, this means that their actuality is suspended and that their remnant of potentiality is restored. This suspension does not mean, however, that the factual conditions of the world are annulled. Factically the world remains the same, yet it is radically different, because it is pregnant with its potentiality. The way the law says the world is, is no longer the entire story. The world is more than the sovereign's interpretation of it.

How should Pauline subjectivity relate to a world which is factically the same, but potentially different? Agamben finds an answer to this question in Paul's theory of use. Even though the facticity of the world should be lived $hōs mē$, Pauline subjectivity can still use it. Agamben makes a distinction between the $ius utendi$ and the $ius abutendi$, the right to use and the right to destroy. Owning something means having both these rights at the same time. The law works by virtue of the $ius abutendi$. This is what gives the sovereign the right to decide over life. The sovereign literally owns life with all the consequences this implies. The $ius abutendi$ is fully suspended by the messianic suspension. What is left is the $ius utendi$, the right to use without destroying something. Pauline subjectivity should use the factual conditions of the world without exerting ownership over them. This means that it is not bound by the factual actualization the law instates, but rather freely uses the potentiality imbued to everything by the messianic suspension of the law. It is,
essentially, accepting the conditions of the world as contingent, but still employing them when needed. Because of this, Pauline subjectivity is—according to the logic of the factical world—filth.\footnote{447} It denies the way the law demands the world works and instead uses it freely.

The world is changed in a twofold way through the transformative event. Firstly, the world itself is changed and secondly, the way Pauline subjectivity relates to it is changed. Heidegger does not discuss the former aspect of the world at all, because when he discusses the notion of \textit{kosmos}, he does it immediately in terms of subjectivity. Badiou and Agamben do both discuss it in some way, but for both of them it coincides with the order of the world under the law. In my discussion of the transformation of ontology, I have already discussed how the order of the world changes according to Badiou and Agamben.

With regards to the way Pauline subjectivity relates to the world, Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben are in agreement. They all argue both argue that Pauline subjectivity should relate to the world as what it is, namely contingent. Pauline subjectivity should deny the logic of necessity of the world and engage with it in its contingency. For Heidegger, this means enacting the world contingently. Badiou adds to this that this is easier said than done, because the world tries to draw Pauline subjectivity back into its logic of necessity. Although Badiou has a different analysis of the order of the world, Heidegger and Badiou are very compatible on this point.

\footnote{447} I deliberately use the word ‘filth’ here, because it best conveys what Paul wants to say. In 1 Cor 4:13, the verse in which this idea is explicitly articulated, Paul uses two words to describe how the factical world sees Pauline subjectivity, namely \textit{περικάθαρμα}, \textit{perikatharma} and \textit{περιψήμα}, \textit{peripsêma}. The first word means trash and the second is a word used to describe the dirt you wiped from your body and has fallen on the ground.
Agamben is in full agreement with Heidegger and even bases himself on the same Pauline text. He adds to that, however, an account of what Paul says about use, which Heidegger ignores. The conditions of the world should indeed be enacted in their contingency and should therefore be considered to not be determinative, but these conditions should also be used. Although the world could have been otherwise, this does not mean one should just ignore it. Rather, one should live in the world and use it when needed, even though the world is suspended and the form of the world is ending.

Agamben’s idea of using the world is very much in line with Heidegger’s reading of Paul. In his discussion of the expectation of the *parousia* in Paul, Heidegger stresses the fact that Pauline subjectivity should obstinately wait. It should not sit around in bovine tranquility, but rather wait while still actively living in the world. For Badiou, however, the order of the world is something that should at best be treated with indifference. It is only present in Pauline subjectivity as that force which tries to drag it away from its evental work. It is not something to be used, but something to be overcome. Here we have the same problem as with identity. Badiou does not see that the factical conditions of the world, while is some way negated by the event, can still matter to Pauline subjectivity in a different way. This is the flaw in Badiou’s account of the world and the strength of Agamben’s. Agamben is simply more realistic about the fact that, even though everything has changed and the factical order of the law is suspended and no longer the only story, people can still care about the factical world.

Agamben’s account has one other major strength. By distinguishing between use and abuse, Pauline subjectivity can also address problems related to nature and ecology. Although Agamben does not say anything specifically about this and Paul definitely does not give an account of ecology, we can draw
certain consequences from Agamben’s analysis. Pauline subjectivity has the right to freely use the world and its bounties, but it cannot destroy, own or hurt it in the process. The power of this account lies in the fact that it is not an ethical or directly political appeal, but an ontological one. The new order of the world does not allow for anyone to have the right to destroy.

4.6. Community

The last of the three themes I want to discuss is community. As I have mentioned in my discussion of community in Heidegger’s reading of Paul in chapter 2, there is actually no such thing as an account of community in Heidegger, let alone an interest in politics. I did make two remarks about aspects of community that Heidegger does find in Paul, which I want to repeat here. Firstly, Heidegger stresses that Paul co-experiences himself in the transformation of subjectivity. This means that Pauline subjectivity intimates community. Multiple people have their subjectivity transformed by the same event. The event is the resurrection, but as we have seen the event can be repeated, which was the case with Paul’s own Damascene experience. Secondly, Heidegger’s lack of engagement with the political aspect of the transformation of Pauline subjectivity is caused by the fact that he does not see or at least does not discuss the fact that in Paul, the transformation of subjectivity was related to a transformation of ontology and the order of the world.

For Badiou, the question of community is tied to the problem of universalism. The event of the resurrection instates the universal truth that death can be overcome through life. This event makes faithful subjects out of people. These people all become subjects. Badiou stresses, however, that no event only makes one subject. An event is open to all. All Pauline
subjectivity’s have been transformed together. They form a universal community. A community, however, needs a common element to function. People form communities on basis of a common identity. It is precisely this form of identity that is annulled by the event. The universal, Pauline community can for Badiou never be found upon these identity differences. What, then, is the basis for the universal community? Badiou finds the answer in Paul’s expression of being God’s co-worker. Pauline subjectivity forms a community based on the collective work that needs to be done. This work is, as we have seen, the work of the event. It is forcing the event into the present.

Agamben claims that the question of messianic community is central to his reading of Paul, but he actually never develops it explicitly. Agamben’s problem of community is very similar to Badiou’s in their readings of Paul. They have both established that worldly identity is no longer valid, but this is that instance on which the traditional concept of community is founded. How, then, can you think a messianic, community without identity?

Even though the law is suspended though the messianic event, it is simultaneously fulfilled. Agamben argues that only the normative element of the law – which is what we in everyday language call the law – is suspended. The promissive aspect of the law still remains. The law, then, still exists in the form of the dual aspects of oath and faith. One party makes an oath and another party puts faith in it. Oath and faith cannot rely on any external entity as a guarantor, but only on the persons in question. If someone is trustworthy depends on his way of life. The messianic community has its foundation in this pre-law.

How does this trustworthiness affect community? Agamben does not discuss this directly, but in his interpretation of the Franciscan Order we can find an indication how this works. The Franciscan Order is a community made
up individuals who do not follow a law in the traditional sense. Rather, each member lives his life based on the same example. Their living together works, because they can trust one another. This trust is established through the simple fact of living. The messianic community, then, has its foundation in its members adopting the same form-of-life. The community of Pauline subjectivity, then, is a simple living together in the same way not regulated by any rule or hierarchy.

Pauline subjectivity is an overcoming of identity. One of the consequences of this is that the traditional notion of community needs to be rethought. A community is a collection of people who belong to the same group by virtue of a shared identity. How can Pauline subjectivity, which is without identity, form a community? Badiou’s solution to this problem is by basing community in work. Pauline subjectivity forms a community by virtue of a shared task. The question one can ask, however, is whether this is actually a community. To be sure, it is a group of people who work at the same task, but – much like everyday coworkers – do they still belong to the same community when they go home, or better yet: when their work is done. Badiou’s form of community seems to be a community of convenience, which will be dissolved when the work of the event is done. This does not seem to be a sustainable idea of community on which you can build a society or politics.

Agamben’s attempt to rethink community circumvents this. For him, community means communal living. Pauline subjectivity belongs to a certain rule for its life. Because this rule is shared, a community is formed. This is definitely a stronger idea of community. The basis of belonging to this community lies in living life itself. Belonging to it, then, is inseparable from life itself. What is most interesting about Agamben’s Pauline community is that it is a community without hierarchy, because – as we have seen – the idea of
power itself is suspended. Instead of taking a recourse to hierarchy, the community organizes itself through the example. The example of the Franciscan order shows that such a community is possible.

In the light of Agamben’s considerations of community, Heidegger should be re-evaluated. The one thing Heidegger actually does say about community in Paul seems to be a crucial point, which Agamben did not explicitly mention. Being part of a community is an integral part of Pauline subjectivity. It is not just one aspect of it, but rather it is fundamental. Badiou sees this point in his theory of the event in *Being and Event*, but does not address this in his reading of Paul. The fact that being part of a community is part of Pauline subjectivity strengthens the idea that this community is formed on the basis of how life is lived. Pauline subjectivity entails living life in a certain way depending on an example. Because this example is the same for everyone, Pauline subjectivity is an inherently communal existence.

**4.7. Conclusion**

In the introduction to this dissertation I raised the following question: how do Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben rethink the subject through their interpretation of the letters of Paul? Related to this question, I have thematized how this reinterpretation of subjectivity affects temporality, community and world. I have answered these questions and compared Heidegger, Badiou’s and Agamben’s readings of these concepts in Paul. What, then, can be said about Pauline subjectivity after these analyses?

Pauline subjectivity is a transformation of life from out of life. This transformation is effected by a shift in ontology. This ontology needs to break with a traditional ontology, which is characterized by necessity, either internal necessity in the form of desire or external necessity in the form of the law. This
necessity is based on a primacy of being over non-being. This becomes clear through Agamben’s analysis of potentiality. What is, is actual and what is not, is potential. If potentiality is determined by actuality through generic potentiality, then that which is, is the necessary outcome of that which is not. This primacy of being as it is by virtue of its necessary actualization almost inevitably leads to the modern idea of progress and consequently to the idea of the subject as lord of being. Certain subjects can use this, then, to legitimize their power, status and privilege. For this reason, Pauline subjectivity has to be grounded on an ontology that gives a primacy to non-being.

Ontology – especially if we accept that the political status quo is based on ontology – does not just change. A theory of Pauline subjectivity, then, needs to account for the origin of this shift in ontology. As I have argued, none of the three philosophers do this. Only Badiou explicitly discusses this through the event in Paul, but he uses a fully formal register. Although in Paul, the origin of the transformations is God, a contemporary philosophical account wants an immanent account of this shift, either in the form of God or something else.\(^4^{48}\) The first step in developing a Pauline theory of subjectivity, 

then, entails having a theory of the event. It goes far beyond the constraints of
this dissertation to discuss the intricacies of the event in philosophy, but at the
very least we can conclude that an event – or a God or the messianic – is
needed as a condition of the possibility for Pauline subjectivity.

The ontological shift of choosing non-being over being leads to the
formation of Pauline subjectivity. This is a subjectivity that is non-identitarian
and contingent. Firstly, this subjectivity does not depend on any prior factical
identity or factical condition, nor is it such an identity itself. It does, however,
bracket the essentialistic and exhaustive nature of every identity. In this way, it
avoids any politics of identity. Someone can no longer be judged on his or her
factical conditions, because that is not what someone is. Instead of identity,
Pauline subjectivity is an enactment. It is a way of living life in which the form
and act of living are inseparable. Secondly, Pauline subjectivity is contingent. It
is contingent in a dual sense. On the one hand, it accepts that things happen. It
lives in the contingency of life. On the other hand, it is liberated from the
necessity of determinism. Both the world as well as Pauline subjectivity is
freed from necessity.

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Summary

In this dissertation I engage with the philosophical ‘turn to Paul’. Starting in the 1990’s a group of influential, contemporary philosophers working in the continental tradition have started reading and writing about Saint Paul. This has opened numerous avenues for philosophical investigation into a multitude of phenomena of which I address one, namely what can be gained from a philosophical analysis of subjectivity in Paul.

In my research I focused on the analysis of Pauline subjectivity in the work of three, contemporary philosophers: Martin Heidegger, Alain Badiou and Giorgio Agamben. I focus on these three authors because they cover a wide range of perspectives on Paul and because these three authors are in a dialogue with each other in their writings on Paul.

Subjectivity does not denote a static idea of the subject, but rather a dynamic process in which the situation – in the broadest sense of the word - in which life is lived, interacts with and changes life. Pauline subjectivity is not a form of subjectivity, but a transformation of subjectivity. It is a becoming a subject by an event. The transformation of subjectivity is not a transformation from being a subject towards being a different kind of subject. Rather, it is a shift from being to becoming. Pauline subjectivity is not a change from one form of life to another, but a transformation within life itself. Life remains the same, but at the same time is changed in a most radical way.

This new subjectivity is characterized by two key features, namely contingency and non-identity. Contingency means that Pauline subjectivity is not lived through necessity. Rather, it accepts the radical insecurity inherent in life. Non-identity denotes the fact that Pauline subjectivity is not an identity marker that is applied to a person. Heidegger, Badiou and Agamben all give
their own account of Pauline subjectivity, which fits this general structure. Pauline subjectivity can be seen in three key concepts, namely community, temporality and world. The change in subjectivity affects how one experiences the other people who have had their subjectivity transformed, the way time is lived and the relation one has to the world.

In chapters 1, 2 and 3 I examine how this concept of subjectivity occurs in respectively Heidegger’s, Badiou’s and Agamben’s writings on Paul. In the final chapter I weigh these three accounts against each other and develop a coherent account of Pauline subjectivity.

Heidegger understands Pauline subjectivity in terms of having-become. The people who have had their being transformed have become something else and they know this. This change has been brought about by Paul’s proclamation that the parousia will come very soon and then everything will change. Because life is lived in relation to the impending parousia, life should be enacted differently. Enactment is an important concept for Heidegger. Enactment denotes understanding life as it is lived and not in an abstract way. Pauline subjectivity, according to Heidegger, was enacted through the hos mé, the as if not. Everything factically remains the same, but one relates to it differently.

Badiou sees Pauline subjectivity as a subjectivity which is characterized by the ‘not ... but’. In Badiou’s reading of Paul, Paul distinguishes between two forms of life. The path of the flesh and the path of the spirit. As we have seen, Badiou claims that Pauline subjectivity tries to live according to the spirit, but is always tempted by the path of the flesh. Living by the spirit means accepting the truth stemming from the event of the resurrection and living life according to this truth.
Agamben understands Pauline subjectivity in relation to the law. In Agamben’s analysis, the law forces all people into a logic of binary oppositions. Either you are A or you are non-A. There is no third term, nor is there an in-between. The messianic event intervenes in this logic and deactivates the binary oppositions. Because of this, the actualities of subjectivity are suspended and, as such, subjectivity is no longer defined by it. Rather, Pauline subjectivity is defined by it’s potentiality.

All three philosophers understand Pauline subjectivity in a similar way, although they each have their own vocabulary. All three philosophers, however, agree that subjectivity is contingent and non-identitarian. It still has factual identity, but it is no longer defined by it. In this way, it avoids any politics of identity. The subjectivity’s potential always supersedes every actuality. Furthermore, it is contingent in a dual sense. It is contingent in that it accepts that it cannot control reality. It is no longer the master of nature, which the modern, non-Pauline subject thought it was. It is also contingent in that it gains a radical freedom against ontology and the law. It is no longer tied down to an external necessity, either in the form of a generic potentiality or by the fixing of its desires in an object mandated by an external entity.

This changed subjectivity affects temporality, community and the relationship to the world. Firstly, temporality. It is a form of temporality that has a new relationship to the past, present and future. The past informs the present as a potential. The contingency Pauline subjectivity accepts means that things could have been differently. Pauline subjectivity has the responsibility to enact that, which never was, but could have been. Pauline subjectivity gains this structure because it has been transformed by a past event, which it continually brings with it into the present. Secondly, the world. Pauline subjectivity denies the logic of necessity of the world and engages with it in its
contingency. It deems the things the world considers important to be folly and values the filth of the world. Thirdly, community. Pauline subjectivity is based on non-identity. One of the consequences of this is that the traditional notion of community needs to be rethought. Traditionally, a community is a collection of people who belong to the same group by virtue of a shared characteristic or identity. Pauline subjectivity, however, forms a community by virtue of a shared task. The basis of belonging to this community lies in living life itself. Belonging to it, then, is inseparable from life itself. It is a community of people who understand life through a subjectivity of non-identity and contingency.
Samenvatting

In dit proefschrift bespreek ik de filosofische ‘wending naar Paulus’. Vanaf de 90er jaren van de twintigste eeuw is een groep invloedrijke, contemporaine filosofen uit de continentale traditie begonnen met het lezen van en schrijven over Paulus. Dit heeft meerdere wegen geopend voor filosofisch onderzoek naar een veelvoud aan fenomenen. Een van deze wegen zal ik in dit proefschrift bespreken, namelijk wat levert een filosofische analyse van subjectiviteit in Paulus op.

In mijn onderzoek richt ik me op de analyse van Paulijnse subjectiviteit in het werk van drie, contemporaine filosofen: Martin Heidegger, Alain Badiou en Giorgio Agamben. Ik heb voor deze drie auteurs gekozen, omdat zij een breed bereik aan perspectieven op Paulus bestrijken en omdat deze drie auteurs in dialoog met elkaar zijn in hun werk over Paulus.

Subjectiviteit is niet een statisch subjectsbegrip, maar een dynamisch proces waarin de situatie – in de breedste zin van het woord – waarin het leven geleefd wordt het leven verandert. Paulijnse subjectiviteit is niet een vorm van subjectiviteit, maar een transformatie van subjectiviteit. Het is het worden van een subject door een bepaalde gebeurtenis. Deze transformatie is geen transformatie van het zijn van een subject naar het zijn van een andere soort subject. Het is een transformatie van zijn naar worden. Paulijnse subjectiviteit is geen wisseling van de ene vorm van leven naar een andere, maar een transformatie binnen het leven zelf. Het leven blijft hetzelfde, maar wordt tegelijkertijd op de meest radicale manier veranderd.

De nieuwe subjectiviteit wordt gekenmerkt door twee cruciale eigenschappen, namelijk contingentie en non-identiteit. Contingentie betekent dat Paulijnse subjectiviteit niet geleefd wordt door noodzakelijkheid.
Integendeel, het accepteert de radicale onzekerheid inherent aan het leven. Non-identiteit duidt het feit aan dat Paulijnse subjectiviteit geen identiteitsmarker is die toegepast wordt op een persoon. H, B en A geven alle drie een eigen uitleg van Paulijnse subjectiviteit, die past binnen de structuur die hier uitgelegd is. Paulijnse subjectiviteit uit zich in drie kernconcepten, namelijk gemeenschap, tijdelijkheid en wereld. De verandering in subjectiviteit beïnvloedt hoe iemand de anderen wiens subjectiviteit ook getransformeerd is ervaart, de manier waarop tijd ervaren wordt en de relatie die iemand heeft ten opzichte van de wereld.

In hoofdstuk 1, 2 en 3 onderzoek ik hoe dit concept van subjectiviteit terugkomt in respectievelijk het werk over Paulus van Heidegger, Badiou en Agamben. In het laatste hoofdstuk weeg ik deze drie interpretaties tegen elkaar af en ontwikkel ik een coherent idee van Paulijnse subjectiviteit.


Badiou ziet Paulijnse subjectiviteit als een subjectiviteit die gekarakteriseerd wordt door de ‘niet...maar’. In Badiou’s lezing van Paulus, maakt Paulus een onderscheid tussen twee vormen van leven. Het pad van het
vlees en het pad van de geest. Zoals we hebben gezien, beweert Badiou dat Paulijnse subjectiviteit probeert te leven volgens de geest, maar dat deze altijd wordt verlokt door het pad van het vlees. Leven volgens de geest betekent het accepteren van de waarheid die voortkomt uit het evenement van de wederopstanding en het leven leven volgens deze waarheid.


Alle drie de filosofen begrijpen Paulijnse subjectiviteit op een gelijkwaardige manier, hoewel ieder zijn eigen vocabulair gebruikt. Alle drie zijn ze het er echter over eens dat deze subjectiviteit contingent en non-identitair is. Het heeft nog steeds zijn factische identiteit, maar het wordt hier niet langer door bepaald. Op deze manier vermijdt het elke vorm van identiteitspolitiek. De potentialiteit van deze subjectiviteit overschrijdt altijd elke actualiteit. Daarnaast is Paulijnse subjectiviteit contingent op twee wijzen. Het is contingent in dat het accepteert dat het de realiteit niet kan beheersen. Het is niet langer de meester van de natuur, wat het moderne, pre-Paulijnse subject dacht te zijn. Paulijnse subjectiviteit is ook contingent in dat het een radicale vrijheid krijgt tegenover ontologie en de wet. Het wordt niet langer gebonden door een externe noodzakelijkheid, ofwel in de vorm van een generieke potentialiteit, dan wel doordat zijn verlangens gefixeerd worden op een object door een externe instantie.
Deze veranderde subjectiviteit beïnvloedt de tijdelijk, gemeenschap en de relatie tot de wereld. Ten eerste tijdelijkheid. Het is een vorm van tijdelijkheid die een nieuwe relatie heeft tot het verleden, het heden en de toekomst. Het verleden informeert het heden als een potentie. De contingentie van de Paulijnse subjectiviteit houdt in dat het accepteert dat dingen anders hadden kunnen zijn. Paulijnse subjectiviteit heeft de verantwoordelijkheid om hetgeen te voltrekken dat nooit is geweest, maar had kunnen zijn. Paulijnse subjectiviteit krijgt deze structuur omdat het is getransformeerd door een gebeurtenis in het verleden die het continu in het heden tot uiting laat komen. Ten tweede de wereld. Paulijnse subjectiviteit ontkent de logica van noodzakelijkheid van de wereld en verhoudt zich in contingentie tot de wereld. Het beschouwt de dingen die de wereldbelangrijk vindt als dwaas en waardeert het uitschot van de wereld. Ten derde gemeenschap. Paulijnse subjectiviteit is gebaseerd op non-identiteit. Eén van de consequenties is dat het traditionele notie van gemeenschap opnieuw doordacht moet worden. Traditioneel wordt een gemeenschap gezien als een groep mensen die bij dezelfde groep horen op basis van een gemeenschappelijk kenmerk of identiteit. Paulijnse subjectiviteit vormt echter een gemeenschap op basis van een gemeenschappelijke taak. De basis van het horen bij deze gemeenschap ligt in het leven van het leven zelf. Ertoe behoren is dus onseheidbaar van het leven zelf. Het is een gemeenschap van mensen die het leven begrijpen door een subjectiviteit van non-identiteit en contingentie.
Curriculum Vitae

Ezra Delahaye was born in Breda, the Netherlands in 1988. He holds a degree in theology from Tilburg University (cum laude) and a degree in philosophy from Radboud University (cum laude). From 2012 to 2016 he was a PhD researcher at the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies at Radboud University. In 2015 he spent a semester as a visiting scholar at Villanova University in the USA. Since December 2016 he has been working as a policy advisor at the Faculty of Science of the Radboud University. Ezra is married and will soon become a father.