

ZIZEK KRITIK AGAINST PERFORMANCE

number your pages!!

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YOUR POLITICS IS MERELY AN ETHICS OF TALKING...BECAUSE YOU ARE MERELY CREATING A SPACE FOR THE MULTIPLICITIES OF IDENTITIES AND NARRATIVES THAT ARE ALL A) ALL PRECONDITIONED BY THE LIBERAL-DEMOCRATIC ORDER AND B) COMPLICIT IN THE DOMINATION OF CAPITAL

ZIZEK 2001 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *Repeating Lenin*. Lacanian Ink, accessed online at www.lacan.com/replenis)

"To put it briefly, the East wishes to talk in terms of power and oppression; the West in terms of culture and commodification. There are really no common denominators in this initial struggle for discursive rules, and what we end up with is the inevitable comedy of each side muttering irrelevant replies in its own favorite language."¹⁶

Jameson at the same time insists that Marxism still provides the universal meta-language enabling us to situate and relate all other partial narrativizations/interpretations - is he simply inconsistent? Are there two Jamesons: one, postmodern, the theorist of the irreducible multiplicity of the narratives, the other, the more traditional partisan of the Marxist universal hermeneutics? The only way to save Jameson from this predicament is to insist that Marxism is here not the all-encompassing interpretive horizon, but the matrix which enables us to account for (to generate) the multiplicity of narratives and/or interpretations. It is also here that one should introduce the key dialectical distinction between the FOUNDING figure of a movement and the later figure who FORMALIZED this movement: ultimately, it was Lenin who effectively "formalized" Marx by way of defining the Party as the political form of its historical intervention, in the same way that St. Paul "formalized" Christ and Lacan "formalized" Freud.¹⁷

This formalization is strictly correlative to focusing on the Real of an antagonism: "class struggle" is not the last horizon of meaning, the last signified of all social phenomena, but the formal generative matrix of the different ideological horizons of understanding. That is to say, one should not confuse this properly dialectical notion of Form with the liberal-multiculturalist notion of Form as the neutral framework of the multitude of "narratives" - not only literature, but also politics, religion, science, they are all different narratives, stories we are telling ourselves about ourselves, and the ultimate goal of ethics is to guarantee the neutral space in which this multitude of narratives can peacefully coexist, in which everyone, from ethnic to sexual minorities, will have the right and possibility to tell his story. The properly dialectical notion of Form signals precisely the IMPOSSIBILITY of this liberal notion of Form: Form has nothing to do with "formalism," with the idea of a neutral Form, independent of its contingent particular content; it rather stands for the traumatic kernel of the Real, for the antagonism, which "colors" the entire field in question. In this precise sense, class struggle is the Form of the Social: every social phenomenon is overdetermined by it, which means that it is not possible to remain neutral towards it.

THE IMPACT IS THAT CAPITALIST THINKING IS THE GROUNDING FOR THE CONSUMPTIVE MINDSETS THAT FUEL THE GLOBAL WAR MACHINE AND MAKE ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION AND EXTINCTION INEVITABLE

MASSUMI 1993 (Brian Comparative Literature Professor, *Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*)

“Postmodernity” is not nothing; it constitutes a limited becoming-supermodernity that can increase some bodies’ degrees of freedom beyond anything seen before. The fact that society has reached the point that it can forego both interiority and belief and embrace creation is not to be lamented. A real cause for concern is that it has done so in a framework that restricts mutation. The forced movement of liberal democracy (parodic verisimilitude) has re-become real movement (simulation),¹⁷ but within limits: a body’s transformational potential is indexed to its buying power. This means that the privilege of self-invention will never extend to every body. Not only do most bodies *not* have infinite degrees of freedom, alarming and increasing numbers are starving or malnourished. Mere survival is a privilege in the brave new neoconservative world. Capitalism’s endocolonial expansion has made the law of unequal exchange that is written into its axiomatic an inescapable and lethal fact of life. Its outward surge of expansion has nearly exhausted the earth, threatening to destroy the environment on which all life depends. Capitalism has not ushered in an age of universal wealth and well-being and *never will*. All it can do is displace its own limits.¹⁸ The limits of capitalism used to be external boundaries falling between its formations and non- or precapitalist ones: between molarity and molecularity, the capitalist class and the proletariat, the “First World” and the “Third World,” resource depletion and technological progress. These boundaries were overtaken by capitalism as it grew to saturate its field of exteriority. Molarity/molecularity has been counteractualized as a distinction between commercialized codes and equally commercialized subcodes (the identification of the “Other” replaced by trafficking in affects for use in becoming-other). Some proletarians have been integrated as corporatist workers who are both commodities on the “job market” and consumers (Fordism), while growing numbers have been relegated to a “permanent underclass” locked out of steady employment and thus restricted to participating in the economy as consumers—of the inadequate social services still available after the gutting of the welfare state.¹⁹ The inclusion of all nations in the international debt economy and the creation of “peripheral” areas of underdevelopment in the very heart of the Western world’s largest capitals have blurred the boundaries between the “First” and “Third” Worlds. The first three limits have been internalized by capitalism, in the sense of being subsumed by its axiomatic. The last limit, between resource depletion and technological progress, *not only remains but has become absolute*: the death of the planet.

This limit cannot be internalized by capital (although the nuclear arms race of the Cold War period that transformed the "advanced" nations into permanent war economies based on postponed conflagration was a delinquent attempt to do just that). It can, however, be crossed. If it is, capitalism's destiny to cross it. For although capitalism has turned quantum in its mode of operation, it has done so in the service of quantity: consumption and accumulation are, have been, and will always be its reason for being. Capitalism's strength, and its fatal weakness, is to have elevated consumption and accumulation to the level of a principle, marshaling superhuman forces of invention and destruction. The abstract machine of consumption-accumulation has risen, Trump-like in all its inhuman glory; its fall will be a great deal harder.

THE ALTERNATIVE IS TO REFUSE THE IMPETUS TO ACT. ALL ACTION IS PRECONDITIONED BY CAPITALISM; WE CAN HEAR THE NARRATIVES OF MINORITIES SO LONG AS IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE GENERAL COORDINATES OF CAPITALISM. BY REFUSING TO ALLOW OUR ACTIONS TO FIT WITHIN THE SCHEME OF WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE BY CAPITAL WE CAN TRULY ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING REVOLUTIONARY

ZIZEK 2001 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *Repeating Lenin*. Lacanian Ink, accessed online at www.lacan.com/replenis)

One is therefore tempted to turn around Marx's thesis 11: the first task today is precisely NOT to succumb to the temptation to act, to directly intervene and change things (which then inevitably ends in a cul de sac of debilitating impossibility: "what can one do against the global capital?"), but to question the hegemonic ideological coordinates. If, today, one follows a direct call to act, this act will not be performed in an empty space - it will be an act WITHIN the hegemonic ideological coordinates: those who "really want to do something to help people" get involved in (undoubtedly honorable) exploits like Medecins sans frontiere, Greenpeace, feminist and anti-racist campaigns, which are all not only tolerated, but even supported by the media, even if they seemingly enter the economic territory (say, denouncing and boycotting companies which do not respect ecological conditions or which use child labor) - they are tolerated and supported as long as they do not get too close to a certain limit. This kind of activity provides the perfect example of interpassivity²: of doing things not to achieve something, but to PREVENT from something really happening, really changing. All the frenetic humanitarian, politically correct, etc., activity fits the formula of "Let's go on changing something all the time so that, globally, things will remain the same!"

Let us take two predominant topics of today's American radical academia: postcolonial and queer (gay) studies. The problem of postcolonialism is undoubtedly crucial; however, "postcolonial studies" tend to translate it into the multiculturalist problematic of the colonized minorities' "right to narrate" their victimizing experience, of the power mechanisms which repress "otherness," so that, at the end of the day, we learn that the root of the postcolonial exploitation is our intolerance towards the Other, and, furthermore, that this intolerance itself is rooted in our intolerance towards the "Stranger in Ourselves," in our inability to confront what we repressed in and of ourselves - the politico-economic struggle is thus imperceptibly transformed into a pseudo-psychanalytic drama of the subject unable to confront its inner traumas... The true corruption of the American academia is not primarily financial, it is not only that they are able to buy many European critical intellectuals (myself included - up to a point), but conceptual: notions of the "European" critical theory are imperceptibly translated into the benign universe of the Cultural Studies chic.

My personal experience is that practically all of the "radical" academics silently count on the long-term stability of the American capitalist model, with the secure tenured position as their ultimate professional goal (a surprising number of them even play on the stock market). If there is a thing they are genuinely horrified of, it is a radical shattering of the (relatively) safe life environment of the "symbolic classes" in the developed Western societies. Their excessive Politically Correct zeal when dealing with sexism, racism, Third World sweatshops, etc., is thus ultimately a defense against their own innermost identification, a kind of compulsive ritual whose hidden logic is: "Let's talk as much as possible about the necessity of a radical change to make it sure that nothing will really change!" Symptomatic is here the journal October: when you ask one of the editors to what the title refers, they will half-confidentially signal that it is, of course, THAT October - in this way, one can indulge in the jargonistic analyses of the modern art, with the hidden assurance that one is somehow retaining the link with the radical revolutionary past... With regard to this radical chic, the first gesture towards the Third Way ideologists and practitioners should be that of praise: they at least play their game in a straight way, and are honest in their acceptance of the global capitalist coordinates, in contrast to the pseudo-radical academic

Leftists who adopt towards the Third Way the attitude of utter disdain, while their own radicality ultimately amounts to an empty gesture which obliges no one to anything determinate.

It is true that, today, it is the radical populist Right which is usually breaking the (still) predominant liberal-democratic consensus, gradually rendering acceptable the hitherto excluded topics (the partial justification of Fascism, the need to constrain abstract citizenship on behalf of ethnic identity, etc.). However, the hegemonic liberal democracy is using this fact to blackmail the Left radicals: "we shouldn't play with fire: against the new Rightist onslaught, one should more than ever insist on the democratic consensus - any criticism of it willingly or unwillingly helps the new Right!" This is the key line of separation: one should reject this blackmail, taking the risk of disturbing the liberal consensus, up to questioning the very notion of democracy.

OUR POLITICAL ACT THAT TARGETS THE POLITICAL ECONOMY IS CRITICAL TO CREATING A BREAK WITH THE DOMINANT SOCIAL ORDER AND UNDERMINING ALL OF THE REASONS WHY WE NEED YOUR DEMAND IN THE FIRST PLACE

ZIZEK 1999 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *The Ticklish Subject*. Verso)

This antinomy can also be formulated as the antimony between the *simulacra* (of the masks I wear, of the roles I play in the game of intersubjective relationships) and the *Real* (of traumatic bodily violence and cuts). The key point here is again to assert the Hegelian 'speculative identity' between these two opposites: **the price of the global reign of simulacra is extreme violence to the bodily Real.** (Long ago, Lacan provided the formula for this paradoxical coincidence of opposites: **when symbolic efficiency is suspended, the Imaginary falls into the Real.**) So how are we to break out of this vicious cycle? Any attempt to return to Oedipal symbolic authority is clearly self-defeating, and can lead only to ridiculous spectacles like those of the Promise-Keepers. **What is needed is the assertion of a Real which, instead of being caught in the vicious cycle with its imaginary counterpart, (re)introduces the dimension of the impossibility that shatters the Imaginary; in short, what is needed is an act as opposed to mere activity - the authentic act that involves disturbing (traversing) the fantasy. Whenever a subject is 'active'** (especially when he is driven into frenetic hyperactivity), **the question to be asked is: what is the underlying fantasy sustaining this activity? The act - as opposed to activity - occurs only when this phantasmic background itself is disturbed.** In this precise sense, act for Lacan is on the side of the object qua real as opposed to signifier (the 'speech act'): we can perform speech acts only in so far as we have accepted the fundamental alienation in the symbolic order and the phantasmic support necessary for the functioning of this order, while the act as real is an event which occurs outside, without any phantasmic support. As such, the act as object is also to be opposed to the subject, at least in the standard Lacanian sense of the 'alienated' divided subject: the correlate to the act is a divided subject, but not in the sense that, because of this division, the act is always failed, displaced, and so on - on the contrary, the act is its traumatic *acte* it is that which divides the subject who can never subjectivize it, assume it in 'his own', post himself as its author-agent. **the authentic act that I accomplish is always by definition a foreign body, an intruder which simultaneously attracts and repels me, so that if and when I come too close to it, this leads to my aphorism, self-erasure.** If there is a subject to the act, it is not the subject of subjectivization, of integrating the act into the universe of symbolic integration and recognition, of assuming the act as 'my own', but, rather, an uncanny 'aphoristic' subject through which the act takes place as that which is 'in him more than himself'. **The act thus designates the level at which the fundamental divisions and displacements usually associated with the 'Lacanian subject'** (the split between the subject of the castration and the subject of the emancipated/statement; the subject's 'deceitment' with regard to the symbolic big Other, etc.) **are momentarily suspended - in the act, the subject** as Lacan puts it, **posits himself as his own cause, and is no longer determined by the decentred object-cause. For that reason, Kant's description of how a direct insight into the Thing in itself (the noumenal God) would deprive us of our freedom and turn us into lifeless puppets if we subtract from it the scenic imagery** (fascination with the Divine Majesty) and reduce it to the essential (an entity performing what it does 'automatically', without any inner turmoil and struggle), paradoxically fits the description of the (ethical) act perfectly - **this act is precisely something which unexpectedly 'just occurs'** it is an occurrence which also (and even most) surprises its agent itself (after an authentic act, my reaction is always 'Even I don't know how I was able to do that, it just happened!') **The paradox is thus that, in an authentic act, the highest freedom coincides with the utmost passivity, with a reduction to a lifeless automaton who blindly performs its gestures.** The problematic of the act thus compels us to accept the radical shift of perspective involved in the modern notion of finitude: **what is so difficult to accept is not the fact that the true act** in which nouminal and phenomenal dimensions coincide **is forever out of our reach; the true trauma lies in the opposite awareness that there are acts, that they do occur, and that we have to come to terms with them.** [gendered terms have been placed under erasure – FMK]

LINK: NARRATIVES

VOICING YOUR NARRATIVE IS NOT ENOUGH, ITS DISTRACTS FROM THE REAL ROOT THAT CAUSES RACISM AND SEXISM, AND IGNORES THE FACT THAT SOCIETY EXISTS.

ZIZEK 2001 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *Repeating Lenin*. Lacanian Ink, accessed online at www.lacan.com/replenis)

So what are we to say to the standard reproach of "extremism"? Lenin's critique of the "Leftism as the Child Illness of the Communism" is more than actual in the last decades, in which Left often succumbed to the terrorist temptation. Political "extremism" or "excessive radicalism" should always be read as a phenomenon of ideologico-political displacement: as an index of its opposite, of a limitation, of a refusal effectively to "go to the end." What was the Jacobin's recourse to radical "terror" if not a kind of hysterical acting out bearing witness to their inability to disturb the very fundamentals of economic order (private property, etc.)? And does the same not go even for the so-called "excesses" of Political Correctness? Do they also not display the retreat from disturbing the effective (economic etc.) causes of racism and sexism? Perhaps, then, the time has come to render problematic the standard *topos*, shared by practically all the "postmodern" Leftists, according to which political "totalitarianism" somehow results from the predominance of material production and technology over the intersubjective communication and/or symbolic practice, as if the root of the political terror resides in the fact that the "principle" of instrumental reason, of the technological exploitation of nature, is extended also to society, so that people are treated as raw stuff to be transformed into a New Man. What if it is the exact opposite which holds? What if political "terror" signals precisely that the sphere of (material) production is denied in its autonomy and subordinated to political logic? Is it not that all political "terror," from Jacobins to Maoist Cultural Revolution, presupposes the foreclosure of production proper, its reduction to the terrain of political battle?

Recall Badiou's exalted defense of Terror in the French Revolution, in which he quotes the justification of the guillotine for Lavoisier: "La republique n'a pas de besoin de savants. /The Republic has no need for scientists./" Badiou's thesis is that the truth of this statement emerges if we cut it short, depriving it of its caveat: "La republique n'a pas de besoins. /The Republic has no needs./" The Republic gives body to the purely political logic of equality and freedom which should follow its path with no consideration for the "servicing of goods" destined to satisfy the needs of the individuals.³⁹ In the revolutionary process proper, freedom becomes an end-in-itself, caught in its own paroxysm - this suspension of the importance of the sphere of economy, of the (material) production, brings Badiou close to Hannah Arendt for whom, in a strict homology to Badiou, freedom is opposed to the domain of the provision of services and goods, of the maintenance of households and the exercise of administration, which do not belong to politics proper: the only place for freedom is the communal political space. In this precise sense, Badiou's (and Sylvain Lazarus⁴⁰) plea for the reappraisal of Lenin is more ambiguous than it may appear: what it effectively amounts to is nothing less than the abandonment of Marx's key insight into how the political struggle is a spectacle which, in order to be deciphered, has to be referred to the sphere of economics ("if Marxism had any analytical value for political theory, was it not in the insistence that the problem of freedom was contained in the social relations implicitly declared 'unpolitical' - that is, naturalized - in liberal discourse"⁴¹). No wonder that the Lenin Badiou and Lazarus prefer is the Lenin of *What Is to Be Done?*, the Lenin who (in his thesis that the socialist-revolutionary consciousness has to be brought from without to the working class) breaks with Marx's alleged "economism" and asserts the autonomy of the Political, NOT the Lenin of *The State and Revolution*, fascinated by the modern centralized industry, imagining the (depoliticized) ways to reorganize economy and the state apparatus.

What all the new French (or French oriented) theories of the Political, from Balibar through Ranciere and Badiou to Laclau and Mouffe, aim at is - to put it in the traditional philosophical terms - the reduction of the sphere of economy (of the material production) to an "ontic" sphere deprived of the "ontological" dignity. Within this horizon, there is simply no place for the Marxian "critique of political economy": the structure of the universe of commodities and capital in Marx's Capital is NOT just that of a limited empirical sphere, but a kind of socio-transcendental a priori, the matrix which generates the totality of social and political relations. The relationship between economy and politics is ultimately that of the well-known visual paradox of the "two faces or a vase": one either sees the two faces or a vase, never both of them - one has to make a choice.⁴² In the same way, one either focuses on the political, and the domain of economy is

reduced to the empirical "servicing of goods," or one focuses on economy, and politics is reduced to a theater of appearances, to a passing phenomenon which will disappear with the arrival of the developed Communist (or technocratic) society, in which, as already Engels put it, the "administration of people" will vanish in the "administration of things."⁴³

The root of this notion of pure "politics," radically autonomous with regard to history, society, economy, State, even Party, is Badiou's opposition between Being and Event - it is here that Badiou remains "idealist." From the materialist standpoint, an Event emerges "out of nowhere" within a specific constellation of Being - the space of an Event is the minimal "empty" distance between two beings, the "other" dimension which shines through this gap.⁴⁴ So when Badiou and Lazarus insist on the strict frontier between the Political and the Social (the domain of State, historicism...), they concede too much - namely, that SOCIETY EXISTS. They do not get the lesson, articulated by Laclau, that "society doesn't exist," that society is not a positive field, since the gap of the Political is inscribed into its very foundations (Marx's name for the political which traverses the entire social body is "class struggle").

Consequently, Lenin the ultimate political strategist should in no way be separated from Lenin the "technocrat" dreaming about the scientific reorganization of production. The greatness of Lenin is that, although he lacked the proper conceptual apparatus to think these two levels together, he was aware of the urgency to do it - an impossible, yet necessary, task.⁴⁵ What we are dealing with here is another version of the Lacanian "il n'y a pas de rapport...": if, for Lacan, there is no sexual relationship, then, for Marxism proper, there is no relationship between economy and politics, no "meta-language" enabling us to grasp from the same neutral standpoint the two levels, although - or, rather, BECAUSE - these two levels are inextricably intertwined. The "political" class struggle takes place in the very midst of economy (recall that the very last paragraph of Capital III, where the texts abruptly stops, tackles the class struggle), while, at the same time, the domain of economy serves as the key enabling us to decode political struggles. No wonder that the structure of this impossible relationship is that of the Moebius band: first, we have to progress from the political spectacle to its economic infrastructure; then, in the second step, we have to confront the irreducible dimension of the political struggle in the very heart of the economy.

Here, Lenin's stance against economism as well as against pure politics is crucial today, apropos of the split attitude towards economy in (what remains of) the radical circles: on the one hand, the above-mentioned pure "politicians" who abandon economy as the site of struggle and intervention; on the other hand, the economists, fascinated by the functioning of today's global economy, who preclude any possibility of a political intervention proper. Today, more than ever, we should here return to Lenin: yes, economy is the key domain, the battle will be decided there, one has to break the spell of the global capitalism - BUT the intervention should be properly POLITICAL, not economic. The battle to be fought is thus a twofold one: first, yes, anticapitalism. However, anticapitalism without problematizing the capitalism's POLITICAL form (liberal parliamentary democracy) is not sufficient, no matter how "radical" it is. Perhaps THE lure today is the belief that one can undermine capitalism without effectively problematizing the liberal-democratic legacy which - as some Leftists claim - although engendered by capitalism, acquired autonomy and can serve to criticize capitalism. This lure is strictly correlative to its apparent opposite, to the pseudo-Deleuzian love-hate fascinating/fascinated poetic depiction of Capital as a rhizomatic monstre/vampire which deterritorializes and swallows all, indomitable, dynamic, ever raising from the dead, each crisis making it stronger, Dionysos-Phoenix reborn... It is in this poetic (anti)capitalist reference to Marx that Marx is really dead: appropriated when deprived of his political sting.

LINK: NARRATIVES

THE PARTICULAR NARRATIVES ARE NOT IMPORTANT. WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS THE UNIVERSAL DIMENSION THAT THE STORIES EXIST IN. THIS DIMENSION IS GLOBAL CAPITALISM.

ZIZEK 2002 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *I am a fighting atheist: Interview with Slavoj Zizek* in Bad Subjects Issue #59, February 2002)

My opponent here is the widely accepted position that we should leave behind the quest for universal truth — that what we have instead are just different narratives about who we are, the stories we tell about ourselves. So, in that view, the highest ethical injunction is to respect the other story. All the stories should be told, each ethnic, political, or sexual group should be given the right to tell its story, as if this kind of tolerance towards the plurality of stories with no universal truth value is the ultimate ethical horizon.

I oppose this radically. This ethics of storytelling is usually accompanied by a right to narrate, as if the highest act you can do today is to narrate your own story, as if only a black lesbian mother can know what it's like to be a black lesbian mother, and so on. Now this may sound very emancipatory. But the moment we accept this logic, we enter a kind of apartheid. In a situation of social domination, all narratives are not the same. For example, in Germany in the 1930s, the narrative of the Jews wasn't just one among many. This was the narrative that explained the truth about the entire situation. Or today, take the gay struggle. It's not enough for gays to say, "we want our story to be heard." No, the gay narrative must contain a universal dimension, in the sense that their implicit claim must be that what happens to us is not something that concerns only us. What is happening to us is a symptom or signal that tells us something about what's wrong with the entirety of society today. We have to insist on this universal dimension.

LINK: LIBERAL DISCOURSE

LIBERAL DISCOURSE AIMS TO EXCLUDE ANYONE WHO SERIOUSLY QUESTIONS IT, BUT FREEDOM MUST QUESTION THE EXISTING ORDER OR IT MEANS NOTHING.

ZIZEK 2001 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *Repeating Lenin*. Lacanian Ink, accessed online at www.lacan.com/replenis)

What are we to say to this? Again, the problem resides in the implicit qualifications which can be easily discerned by the "concrete analysis of the concrete situation," as Lenin himself would have put it. "Fidelity to the democratic consensus" means the acceptance of the present liberal-parliamentary consensus, which precludes any serious questioning of how this liberal-democratic order is complicit in the phenomena it officially condemns, and, of course, any serious attempt to imagine a society whose socio-political order would be different. In short, it means: say and write whatever you want - on condition that what you do does not effectively question or disturb the predominant political consensus. So everything is allowed, solicited even, as a critical topic: the prospects of a global ecological catastrophe, violations of human rights, sexism, homophobia, antifeminism, the growing violence not only in the far-away countries, but also in our megalopolises, the gap between the First and the Third World, between the rich and the poor, the shattering impact of the digitalization of our daily lives... there is nothing easier today than to get international, state or corporate funds for a multidisciplinary research into how to fight the new forms of ethnic, religious or sexist violence. The problem is that all this occurs against the background of a fundamental Denkverbot, the prohibition to think. Today's liberal-democratic hegemony is sustained by a kind of unwritten Denkverbot similar to the infamous Berufsverbot in Germany of the late 60s - the moment one shows a minimal sign of engaging in political projects that aim to seriously challenge the existing order, the answer is immediately: "Benevolent as it is, this will necessarily end in a new Gulag!" The ideological function of the constant reference to the holocaust, gulag and the more recent Third World catastrophes is thus to serve as the support of this Denkverbot by constantly reminding us how things may have been much worse: "Just look around and see for yourself what will happen if we follow your radical notions!" And it is exactly the same thing that the demand for "scientific objectivity" means: the moment one seriously questions the existing liberal consensus, one is accused of abandoning scientific objectivity for the outdated ideological positions. This is the point on which one cannot and should not concede: today, the actual freedom of thought means the freedom to question the predominant liberal-democratic "post-ideological" consensus - or it means nothing.

LINK: THE STATE

THE STATE IS AN INSTRUMENT OF OPPRESSION THAT NECESSITATES ONE CLASS BEING DICTATOR OVER ANOTHER - IT'S NOT WORTH IMPROVING UPON ITS APPARATUSES.

ZIZEK 2001 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *Repeating Lenin*. Lacanian Ink, accessed online at www.lacan.com/replenis)

So how can the reference to Lenin deliver us from this stuff predicament? Some libertarian Leftists want to redeem - partially, at least - Lenin by opposing the "bad" Jacobin-elitist Lenin of What Is To Be Done?, relying on the Party as the professional intellectual elite which enlightens the working class from OUTSIDE, and the "good" Lenin of State and Revolution, who envisioned the prospect of abolishing the State, of the broad masses directly taking into their hands the administration of the public affairs. However, this opposition has its limits: the key premise of State and Revolution is that one cannot fully "democratize" the State, that State "as such," in its very notion, is a dictatorship of one class over another; the logical conclusion from this premise is that, insofar as we still dwell within the domain of the State, we are legitimized to exercise full violent terror, since, within this domain, every democracy is a fake. So, since state is an instrument of oppression, it is not worth trying to improve its apparatuses, the protection of the legal order, elections, laws guaranteeing personal freedoms... - all this becomes irrelevant. The moment of truth in this reproach is that one cannot separate the unique constellation which enabled the revolutionary takeover in October 1917 from its later "Stalinist" turn: the very constellation that rendered the revolution possible (peasants' dissatisfaction, a well-organized revolutionary elite, etc.) led to the "Stalinist" turn in its aftermath - therein resides the proper Leninist tragedy. Rosa Luxemburg's famous alternative "socialism or barbarism" ended up as the ultimate infinite judgement, asserting the speculative identity of the two opposed terms: the "really existing" socialism WAS barbarism.²⁷

IMPACT: END OF HISTORY

CAPITALISM IS THE END OF HISTORY.

ZIZEK 2001 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *Repeating Lenin*. Lacanian Ink, accessed online at www.lacan.com/replenis)

Capitalism is not just a historical epoch among others - in a way, the once fashionable and today forgotten Francis Fukuyama WAS right, global capitalism IS "the end of history." A certain excess which was as it were kept under check in previous history, perceived as a localizable perversion, as an excess, a deviation, is in capitalism elevated into the very principle of social life, in the speculative movement of money begetting more money, of a system which can survive only by constantly revolutionizing its own conditions, that is to say, in which the thing can only survive as its own excess, constantly exceeding its own "normal" constraints. Let us take the case of consumption: before modernity, we were dealing with the direct opposition between moderate consumption and its excess (gluttony, etc.); with capitalism, the excess (the consumption of "useless things") becomes THE RULE, i.e. the elementary form of buying is the act of buying things we "do NOT really need." And, perhaps, it is only today, in the global capitalism in its "postindustrial" digitalized form, that, to put it in Hegelian terms, the really-existing capitalism is reaching the level of its notion: perhaps, one should follow again Marx's old anti-evolutionist motto (incidentally, taken verbatim from Hegel) that the anatomy of man provides the key for the anatomy of a monkey, i.e. that, in order to deploy the inherent notional structure of a social formation, one must start with its most developed form. Marx located the elementary capitalist antagonism in the opposition between use- and exchange-value: in capitalism, the potentials of this opposition are fully realized, the domain of exchange-values acquires autonomy, is transformed into the specter of self-propelling speculative capital which needs the productive capacities and needs of actual people only as its dispensable temporal embodiment. Marx derived the very notion of economic crisis from this gap: a crisis occurs when reality catches up with the illusory self-generating mirage of money begetting more money - this speculative madness cannot go on indefinitely, it has to explode in ever stronger crises. The ultimate root of the crisis is for him the gap between use and exchange value: the logic of exchange value follows its own path, its own mad dance, irrespective of the real needs of real people. It may appear that this analysis is more than actual today, when the tension between the virtual universe and the real is reaching almost palpably unbearable proportions: on the one hand, we have crazy solipsistic speculations about futures, mergers, etc., following their own inherent logic; on the other hand, reality is catching up in the guise of ecological catastrophes, poverty, the Third World collapse of social life, the Mad Cow Disease. This is why cyber-capitalists can appear as the paradigmatic capitalists today, this is why Bill Gates can dream of the cyberspace as providing the frame for what he calls "frictionless capitalism." What we have here is an ideological short-circuit between the two versions of the gap between reality and virtuality: the gap between real production and virtual spectral domain of the Capital, and the gap between experiential reality and virtual reality of cyberspace. It effectively seems that the cyberspace gap between my fascinating screen persona and the miserable flesh which is "me" off the screen translates into the immediate experience the gap between the Real of the speculative circulation of the capital and the drab reality of impoverished masses... However, is this - this recourse to "reality" which will sooner or later catch up with the virtual game - really the only way to operationalize a critique of capitalism? What if the problem of capitalism is not this solipsistic mad dance, but precisely the opposite: that it continues to disavow its gap with "reality," that it presents itself as serving real needs of real people? The originality of Marx is that he played on both cards simultaneously: the origin of capitalist crises is the gap between use- and exchange-value, AND capitalism constrains the free deployment of productivity.

What all this means is that the urgent task of the economic analysis today is, again, to REPEAT Marx's "critique of political economy, without succumbing to the temptation of the multitude of the ideologies of "postindustrial" societies. The key change concerns the status of private property: the ultimate element of power and control is no longer the last link in the chain of investments, the firm or individual who "really owns" the means of production. The ideal capitalist today functions in a wholly different way: investing borrowed money, "really owning" nothing, even indebted, but nonetheless controlling things. A corporation is owned by another corporation, which is again borrowing money from banks, which may ultimately manipulate money owned by ordinary people like ourselves. With Bill Gates, the "private property of the means of production" becomes meaningless, at least in the standard meaning of the term. The paradox of this virtualization of capitalism is ultimately the same as that of the electron in the elementary particle physics. The mass of each element in our reality is composed of its mass at rest plus the surplus provided by the acceleration of its movement; however, an electron's mass at rest is zero, its mass consists only of the surplus generated by the acceleration of its movement, as if we are dealing with a nothing which acquires some deceptive substance only by magically spinning itself into an excess of itself. Does today's virtual capitalist not function in a homologous way - his "net value" is zero, he directly operates just with the surplus, borrowing from the future?⁴⁷

IMPACT: CAPITALISM

NOT ONLY IS CAPITALISM THE ROOT CAUSE OF YOUR HARMS, BUT IT IS ALSO THE LOGIC THAT NECESSITATES THAT TORTURE AND GUANTANAMO BAY CONTINUES

ZIZEK 2005 (Slavoj Slovenian Philosopher. *Biopolitics: Between Terri Schiavo and Guantanamo*. Artforum December 2005)

The exemplary economic strategy of today's capitalism is outsourcing - giving over the "dirty" process of material production (but also publicity, design, accountancy...) to another company via a subcontract. In this way, one can easily avoid ecological and health rules: the production is done in, say, Indonesia where the ecological and health regulations are much lower than in the West, and the Western global company which owns the logo can claim that it is not responsible for the violations of another company. Are we not getting something homologous with regard to torture? Is torture also not being "outsourced," left to the Third World allies of the US which can do it without worrying about legal problems or public protest? Was such outsourcing not explicitly advocated by Jonathan Alter in *Newsweek* immediately after 9/11? After stating that "we can't legalize torture; it's contrary to American values," he nonetheless concludes that "we'll have to think about transferring some suspects to our less squeamish allies, even if that's hypocritical. Nobody said this was going to be pretty." ¹ This is how, today, the First World democracy more and more functions: by way of "outsourcing" its dirty underside to other countries... We can see how this debate about the need to apply torture was by no means academic: today, Americans even do not trust their allies to do the job properly; the "less squeamish" partner is the disavowed part of the US government itself - a quite logical result, once we recall how the CIA taught the Latino American and Third World American military allies the practice of torture for decades. And, insofar as the predominant skeptical liberal attitude can also be characterized as the one of "outsourced beliefs" (we let the primitive others, "fundamentalists," do their believing for us), does the rise of new religious fundamentalisms in our own societies not signal how the same distrust towards the Third World countries: not only are they not able to do our torturing for us, they even can no longer do our believing for us....

However, the two procedures can also co-exist: US government agencies running the "war on terror" follow a secret program known as "extraordinary rendition": the policy of seizing suspicious individuals without even the semblance of due process and sending them off to be interrogated by allied regimes known to practice torture. ² Another mode of co-existence are also the CIA "black sites," located in foreign countries, but operated by CIA.

IMPACT: RELATIVISM

THE RIGHT TO NARRATE IS NOT ONLY FLAWED WITHIN YOUR FRAMEWORK (SOME TRAUMAS ARE NOT NARRATABLE) BUT IT IS ALSO FLAWED WITHIN THE LARGER CULTURAL CONTEXT ... THAT IS THAT YOU LEAD TO A POLITICS OF RELATIVISM AND FRAGMENTATION

ZIZEK 2001 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *Repeating Lenin*. Lacanian Ink, accessed online at www.lacan.com/replenis)

In a closer analysis, one should exhibit how the cultural relativism of the "right-to-narrate" orientation contains its own apparent opposite, the fixation on the Real of some trauma which resists its narrativization. This properly dialectical tension sustains today's the academic "holocaust industry." My own ultimate experience of the holocaust-industry police occurred in 1997 at a round table in the Centre Pompidou in Paris: I was viciously attacked for an intervention in which (among other things) I claimed, against the neoconservatives deplored the decline of faith today, that the basic need of a normal human being is not to believe himself, but to have another subject who will believe for him, at his place - the reaction of one of the distinguished participants was that, by claiming this, I am ultimately endorsing the holocaust revisionism, justifying the claim that, since everything is a discursive construct, this includes also the holocaust, so it is meaningless to search for what really happened there... Apart from displaying a hypocritical paranoia, my critic was doubly wrong: first, the holocaust revisionists (to my knowledge) NEVER argue in the terms of the postmodern discursive constructionism, but in the terms of very empirical factual analysis: their claims range from the "fact" that there is no written document in which Hitler would have ordered the holocaust, to the weird mathematics of "taking into account the number of gas ovens in Auschwitz, it was not possible to burn so many corpses." Furthermore, not only is the postmodern logic of "everything is a discursive construction, there are no direct firm facts" NEVER used to deflate the holocaust; in a paradox worth noting, it is precisely the postmodern discursive constructionists (like Lyotard) who tend to elevate the holocaust into the supreme ineffable metaphysical Evil - the holocaust serves them as the untouchable-sacred Real, as the negative of the contingent language games.²⁶

The problem with those who perceive every comparison between the holocaust and other concentration camps and mass political crimes as an inadmissible relativization of the holocaust, is that they miss the point and display their own doubt: yes, the holocaust WAS unique, but the only way to establish this uniqueness is to compare it with other similar phenomena and thus demonstrate the limit of this comparison. If one does not risk this comparison, of one prohibits it, one gets caught in the Wittgensteinian paradox of prohibiting to speak about that about which we cannot speak: if we stick to the prohibition of the comparison, the gnawing suspicion emerges that, if we were to be allowed to compare the holocaust with other similar crimes, it would be deprived of its uniqueness...

ALTERNATIVE: REPEAT LENIN

THE ALTERNATIVE IS TO REPEAT LENIN. THIS MEANS TO EMBRACE THE REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT OF QUESTIONING, NOT TO REPEAT COMMUNISM OR MARXISM...THIS SPIRIT IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO COMBAT THE AFFIRMATIVES DEMAND TO LOCATE ACTION WITHIN THE COORDINATES OF LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC CAPITALISM

ZIZEK 2001 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *Repeating Lenin*. Lacanian Ink, accessed online at www.lacan.com/replenis)

In what, then, resides Lenin's greatness? Recall Lenin's shock when, in the Fall of 1914, the Social Democratic parties adopted the "patriotic line" - Lenin even thought that the issue of Vorwärts, the daily newspaper of the German Social Democracy, which reported how Social Democrats in Reichstag voted for the military credits, was a forgery of the Russian secret police destined to deceive the Russian workers. In that era of the military conflict that cut in half the European continent, how difficult it was to reject the notion that one should take sides in this conflict, and to fight against the "patriotic fervor" in one's own country! How many great minds (inclusive of Freud) succumbed to the nationalist temptation, even if only for a couple of weeks! This shock of 1914 was - in Badiou's terms - a désastre, a catastrophe in which an entire world disappeared: not only the idyllic bourgeois faith in progress, but ALSO the socialist movement which accompanied it. Lenin himself (the Lenin of What Is to Be Done?) lost the ground under his feet - there is, in his desperate reaction, no satisfaction, no "I told you so!" THIS the moment of Verzweiflung, THIS catastrophe opened up the site for the Leninist event, for breaking the evolutionary historicism of the Second International - and only Lenin was the one at the level of this opening, the one to articulate the Truth of THIS catastrophe.³⁰ Through this moment of despair, the Lenin who, through reading Hegel, was able to detect the unique chance for revolution, was born. His State and Revolution is strictly correlative to this shattering experience - Lenin's full subjective engagement in it is clear from this famous letter to Kamenev from July 1917:

"Entre nous: If they kill me, I ask you to publish my notebook "Marxism & the State" (stuck in Stockholm). It is bound in a blue cover. It is a collection of all the quotations from Marx & Engels, likewise from Kautsky against Pannekoek. There is a series of remarks & notes, formulations. I think with a week's work it could be published. I consider it imp. for not only Plekhanov but also Kautsky got it wrong. Condition: all this is entre nous."³¹

The existential engagement is here extreme, and the kernel of the Leninist "utopia" arises out of the ashes of the catastrophe of 1914, in his settling of the accounts with the Second International orthodoxy: the radical imperative to smash the bourgeois state, which means the state AS SUCH, and to invent a new communal social form without a standing army, police or bureaucracy, in which all could take part in the administration of the social matters. This was for Lenin no theoretical project for some distant future - in October 1917, Lenin claimed that "we can at once set in motion a state apparatus constituting of ten if not twenty million people."³² This urge of the moment is the true utopia. One cannot overestimate the explosive potential of The State and Revolution - in this book, "the vocabulary and grammar of the Western tradition of politics was abruptly dispensed with."³³ What then followed can be called, borrowing the title of Althusser's text on Machiavelli, *la solitude de Lenine*: the time when he basically stood alone, struggling against the current in his own party. When, in his "April Theses" from 1917, Lenin discerned the Augenblick, the unique chance for a revolution, his proposals were first met with stupor or contempt by a large majority of his party colleagues. Within the Bolshevik party, no prominent leader supported his call to revolution, and Pravda took the extraordinary step of dissociating the party, and the editorial board as a whole, from Lenin's "April Theses" - far from being an opportunist flattering and exploiting the prevailing mood of the populace, Lenin's views were highly

idiosyncratic. Bogdanov characterized "April Theses" as "the delirium of a madman,"³⁴ and Nadezhda Krupskaya herself concluded that "I am afraid it looks as if Lenin has gone crazy."³⁵

"Lenin" is not the nostalgic name for old dogmatic certainty; quite on the contrary, to put it in Kierkegaard's terms, THE Lenin which we want to retrieve is the Lenin-in-becoming, the Lenin whose fundamental experience was that of being thrown into a catastrophic new constellation in which old coordinates proved useless, and who was thus compelled to REINVENT Marxism - recall his acerb remark apropos of some new problem: "About this, Marx and Engels said not a word." The idea is not to return to Lenin, but to REPEAT him in the Kierkegaardian sense: to retrieve the same impulse in today's constellation. The return to Lenin aims neither at nostalgically reenacting the "good old revolutionary times," nor at the opportunistic-pragmatic adjustment of the old program to "new conditions," but at repeating, in the present world-wide conditions, the Leninist gesture of reinventing the revolutionary project in the conditions of imperialism and colonialism, more precisely: after the politico-ideological collapse of the long era of progressism in the catastrophe of 1914. Eric Hobsbawm defined the CONCEPT of the XXth century as the time between 1914, the end of the long peaceful expansion of capitalism, and 1990, the emergence of the new form of global capitalism after the collapse of the Really Existing Socialism. What Lenin did for 1914, we should do for 1990. "Lenin" stands for the compelling FREEDOM to suspend the stale existing (post)ideological coordinates, the debilitating Denkverbot in which we live - it simply means that we are allowed to think again.

One of the standard accusations against Lenin is that, insensible for the universal human dimension, he perceived all social events through the lenses of the class struggle, of "us against them." However, are Lenin's appeals against the patriotic fervor during the World War I not an exemplary case of practicing what Alain Badiou³⁶ calls the universal function of "humanity," which has nothing whatsoever to do with so-called "humanism." This "humanity" is neither a notional abstraction, nor the pathetic imaginary assertion of the all-encompassing brotherhood, but a universal function which actualizes itself in unique ecstatic experiences, like those of the soldiers from the opposite trenches starting to fraternize. In Jaroslav Hasek's legendary comical novel *The Good Soldier Schwejk*, the adventures of an ordinary Czech soldier who undermines the ruling order by simply following orders too literally, Schwejk finds himself at the frontline trenches in Galicia, where the Austrian army is confronting the Russians. When Austrian soldiers start to shoot, the desperate Schwejk runs into the no-man's-land in front of their trenches, waving desperately his hands and shouting: "Don't shoot! There are men on the other side!" This is what Lenin was aiming at in his call to the tired peasants and other working masses in the Summer of 1917 to stop fighting, dismissed as part of a ruthless strategy to win popular support and thus gain power, even if it meant the military defeat of one's own country (recall the standard argument that, when, in the Spring of 1917, Lenin was allowed by the German state to pass on a sealed train through Germany on his way from Switzerland to Sweden, Finland and then Russia, he was de facto functioning as a German agent).

ALTERNATIVE: REPEAT LENIN

THE POINT OF RETURNING TO LENIN IS TO BE ABLE TO ASK "WHAT IS TRUE", WE SEE BEYOND THE STORIES THAT WE TELL OURSELVES ABOUT OURSELVES – TO THE NEO-LIBERAL CAPITALISM THAT THOSE STORIES WISH TO SUPPLANT.

ZIZEK 2001 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *Repeating Lenin*. Lacanian Ink, accessed online at www.lacan.com/replenis)

Lenin's legacy to be reinvented today is the politics of truth. We live in the "postmodern" era in which truth-claims as such are dismissed as an expression of hidden power-mechanisms - as the reborn pseudo-Nietzscheans like to emphasize, truth is a lie which is most efficient in asserting our will to power. The very question, apropos of some statement, "Is it true?", is supplanted by the question "Under what power conditions can this statement be uttered?". What we get instead of the universal truth is the multitude of perspectives, or, as it is fashionable to put it today, of "narratives" - not only literature, but also politics, religion, science, they are all different narratives, stories we are telling ourselves about ourselves, and the ultimate goal of ethics is to guarantee the neutral space in which this multitude of narratives can peacefully coexist, in which everyone, from ethnic to sexual minorities, will have the right and possibility to tell his story. THE two philosophers of today's global capitalism are the two great Left-liberal "progressives," Richard Rorty and Peter Singer - honest in their consequent stance. Rorty defines the basic coordinates: the fundamental dimension of a human being is the ability to suffer, to experience pain and humiliation - consequently, since humans are symbolic animals, the fundamental right is the right to narrate one's experience of suffering and humiliation.¹⁸ Singer then provides the Darwinian background.¹⁹

Singer - usually designated as a "social Darwinist with a collectivist socialist face" - starts innocently enough, trying to argue that people will be happier if they lead lives committed to ethics: a life spent trying to help others and reduce suffering is really the most moral and fulfilling one. He radicalizes and actualizes Jeremiah Bentham, the father of utilitarianism: the ultimate ethical criterion is not the dignity (rationality, soul) of man, but the ability to SUFFER, to experience pain, which man shares with animals. With inexorable radicality, Singer levels the animal/human divide: better kill an old suffering woman than healthy animals... Look an orangutan straight in the eye and what do you see? A none-too-distant cousin - a creature worthy of all the legal rights and privileges that humans enjoy. One should thus extend aspects of equality - the right to life, the protection of individual liberties, the prohibition of torture - at least to the nonhuman great apes (chimpanzees, orangutans, gorillas).

Singer argues that "speciesism" (privileging the human species) is no different from racism: our perception of a difference between humans and (other) animals is no less illogical and unethical than our one-time perception of an ethical difference between, say, men and women, or blacks and whites. Intelligence is no basis for determining ethical stature: the lives of humans are not worth more than the lives of animals simply because they display more intelligence (if intelligence were a standard of judgment, Singer points out, we could perform medical experiments on the mentally retarded with moral impunity). Ultimately, all things being equal, an animal has as much interest in living as a human. Therefore, all things being equal, medical experimentation on animals is immoral: those who advocate such experiments claim that sacrificing the lives of 20 animals will save millions of human lives - however, what about sacrificing 20 humans to save millions of animals? As Singer's critics like to point out, the horrifying extension of this principle is that the interests of 20 people outweighs the interests of one, which gives the green light to all sorts of human rights abuses.

ALT NET BENEFIT: UNIVERSAL EMANCIPATION

OUR POLITICS OPENS THE SPACE FOR A UNIVERSAL EMANCIPATION

ZIZEK 2001 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *Repeating Lenin*. Lacanian Ink, accessed online at www.lacan.com/replenis)

In his Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Marx already deploys something like the logic of hegemony: the emergence of a "universal class," a particular class which imposes itself as universal, engendering global enthusiasm, standing for society AS SUCH against the ancien regime, anti-social crime AS SUCH (like bourgeoisie in the French revolution). After follows the disillusion so sarcastically described by Marx: the day after, the gap between universal and particular becomes visible again, capitalist vulgar profit as the actuality of universal freedom, etc. - For Marx, of course, the only universal class whose singularity (exclusion from society of property) guarantees its ACTUAL universality, is the proletariat. This is what Ernesto Laclau rejects in his logic of hegemony: for Laclau, the short-circuit between the Universal and the Particular is ALWAYS illusory, temporary, a kind of "transcendental paralogism."¹² However, is Marx's proletariat really the negative of positive full essential humanity, or "only" the gap of universality AS SUCH, irrecoverable in any positivity?¹³ In Alain Badiou's terms, proletariat is not another PARTICULAR class, but a SINGULARITY of the social structure, and AS SUCH the universal class, the non-class among the classes.

What is crucial here is the properly temporal-dialectical tension between the Universal and the Particular. When Marx says that, in Germany, because of the compromised pettiness of the bourgeoisie, it is too late for the partial bourgeois emancipation, and that, because of it, in Germany, the condition of every particular emancipation is the UNIVERSAL emancipation, one way to read this is to see in it the assertion of the universal "normal" paradigm and its exception: in the "normal" case, partial (false) bourgeois emancipation will be followed by the universal emancipation through the proletarian revolution, while in Germany, the "normal" order gets mixed up. There is, however, another, much more radical way to read it: the very German exception, the inability of its bourgeoisie to achieve partial emancipation, opens up the space for the possible UNIVERSAL emancipation. The dimension of universality thus emerges (only) where the "normal" order en chaining the succession of the particulars is perturbed. Because of this, there is no "normal" revolution, EACH revolutionary explosion is grounded in an exception, in a short-circuit of "too late" and "too early." The French Revolution occurred because France was not able to follow the "normal" English path of capitalist development; the very "normal" English path resulted in the "unnatural" division of labor between the capitalists who hold socio-economic power and the aristocracy to which was left the political power.

2NC ALT EXTENSION

THE AFFIRMATIVE'S POLITICS ARE JUST PLAYGROUND BICKERING WITH THE NEW RIGHT AND DON'T AFFECT ANYTHING. THEIR COMPLICITY IN THE LIBERAL ORDER GIVES IT THE MANDATE TO CONTINUE THE STATUS QUO. PREFER A POLITICS THAT CAN BREAK OUT OF THE CONSTRAINTS OF WHAT APPEARS POSSIBLE AND ENDANGER THE SYSTEM AS SUCH.

ZIZEK 2001 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *Repeating Lenin*. Lacanian Ink, accessed online at www.lacan.com/replenis)

Today, we already can discern the signs of a kind of general unease - recall the series of events usually listed under the name of "Seattle." The 10 years honeymoon of the triumphant global capitalism is over, the long-overdue "seven years itch" is here - witness the panicky reactions of the big media, which - from the Time magazine to CNN - all of a sudden started to warn about the Marxists manipulating the crowd of the "honest" protesters. The problem is now the strictly Leninist one - how to ACTUALIZE the media's accusations: how to invent the organizational structure which will confer on this unrest the FORM of the universal political demand. Otherwise, the momentum will be lost, and what will remain is the marginal disturbance, perhaps organized as a new Greenpeace, with certain efficiency, but also strictly limited goals, marketing strategy, etc. In other words, the key "Leninist" lesson today is: politics without the organizational FORM of the party is politics without politics, so the answer to those who want just the (quite adequately named) "New SOCIAL Movements" is the same as the answer of the Jacobins to the Girondin compromisers: "You want revolution without a revolution!" Today's blockade is that there are two ways open for the socio-political engagement: either play the game of the system, engage in the "long march through the institutions," or get active in new social movements, from feminism through ecology to anti-racism. And, again, the limit of these movements is that they are not POLITICAL in the sense of the Universal Singular: they are "one issue movements" which lack the dimension of the universality, i.e. they do not relate to the social TOTALITY.

Here, Lenin's reproach to liberals is crucial: they only EXPLOIT the working classes' discontent to strengthen their position vis-a-vis the conservatives, instead of identifying with it to the end.⁵² Is this also not the case with today's Left liberals? They like to evoke racism, ecology, workers' grievances, etc., to score points over the conservatives WITHOUT ENDANGERING THE SYSTEM. Recall how, in Seattle, Bill Clinton himself deftly referred to the protesters on the streets outside, reminding the gathered leaders inside the guarded palaces that they should listen to the message of the demonstrators (the message which, of course, Clinton interpreted, depriving it of its subversive sting attributed to the dangerous extremists introducing chaos and violence into the majority of peaceful protesters). It's the same with all New Social Movements, up to the Zapatistas in Chiapas: the systemic politics is always ready to "listen to their demands," depriving them of their proper political sting. The system is by definition ecumenical, open, tolerant, ready to "listen" to all - even if one insist on one's demands, they are deprived of their universal political sting by the very form of negotiation. The true Third Way we have to look for is this third way between the institutionalized parliamentary politics and the new social movements.

The ultimate answer to the reproach that the radical Left proposals are utopian should thus be that, today, the true utopia is the belief that the present liberal-democratic capitalist consensus could go on indefinitely, without radical changes. We are thus back at the old '68 motto "Soyons realistes, demandons l'impossible!": in order to be truly a "realist," one must consider breaking out of the constraints of what appears "possible" (or, as we usually put it, "feasible").

A2: PERM

THE REVOLUTION AND THE PLAN CANNOT EXIST AT THE SAME TIME...THE REVOLUTION EXISTS OUTSIDE THE LIBERAL DISCURSIVE ORDER THAT STRUCTURED YOUR AFFIRMATIVE

ZIZEK 2001 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *Repeating Lenin*. Lacanian Ink, accessed online at www.lacan.com/replenis)

And what if we were to connect this notion of the truth emerging from an external encounter with the (in)famous Lenin's notion, from *What Is to Be Done?*, of how the working class cannot achieve its adequate class consciousness "spontaneously," through its own "organic" development, i.e. of how this truth has to be introduced into it from outside (by the Party intellectuals)? In quoting Kautsky at this place, Lenin makes a significant change in his paraphrase: while Kautsky speaks of how the non-working-class intellectuals, who are OUTSIDE THE CLASS STRUGGLE, should introduce SCIENCE (providing objective knowledge of history) to the working class, Lenin speaks of CONSCIOUSNESS which should be introduced from outside by intellectuals who are outside the ECONOMIC struggle, NOT outside the class struggle! Here is the passage from Kautsky which Lenin quotes approvingly -

".../ socialism and class struggle arise side by side and not one out of the other; each arises under different conditions. .../ The vehicle of science is not the proletariat, but the bourgeois intelligentsia .../ Thus, socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without and not something that arose within it spontaneously."¹⁰

- and here is Lenin's paraphrase of it:

".../ all worship of the spontaneity of the working-class movement, all belittling of the role of 'the conscious element,' of the role of Social-Democracy, means, quite independently of whether he who belittles that role desires it or not, a strengthening of the influence of bourgeois ideology upon workers. .../ the only choice is - either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course .../ the spontaneous development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology .../ for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade-unionism."¹¹

It may SOUND the same, but it's NOT: in Kautsky, there is no space for politics proper, just the combination of the social (working class and its struggle, from which intellectuals are implicitly EXCLUDED) and the pure neutral classless, asubjective, knowledge of these intellectuals. In Lenin, on the contrary, "intellectuals" themselves are caught in the conflict of IDEOLOGIES (i.e. the ideological class struggle) which is unsurpassable. (It was already Marx who made this point, from his youth when he dreamt of the unity of German Idealist philosophy and the French revolutionary masses, to his insistence, in late years, that the leadership of the International should under no conditions be left to the English workers: although the most numerous and best organized, they - in contrast to German workers - lack theoretical stringency.)

The key question thus concerns the exact STATUS of this externality: is it simply the externality of an impartial "objective" scientist who, after studying history and establishing that, in the long run, the working class has a great future ahead, decides to join the winning side? So when Lenin says "The theory of Marx is all-powerful, because it is true," everything depends on how we understand "truth" here: is it a neutral "objective knowledge," or the truth of an engaged subject? Lenin's wager - today, in our era of postmodern relativism, more actual than ever - is that universal truth and partisanship, the gesture of taking sides, are not only not mutually exclusive, but condition each other: in a concrete situation, its UNIVERSAL truth can only be articulated from a thoroughly PARTISAN position - truth is by definition one-sided. (This, of course, goes against the predominant doxa of compromise, of finding a middle path among the multitude of conflicting interests.)

Why not, then, shamelessly and courageously ENDORSE the boring standard reproach according to which, Marxism is a "secularized religion," with Lenin as the Messiah, etc.? Yes, assuming the proletarian standpoint IS EXACTLY like making a leap of faith and assuming a full subjective engagement for its Cause; yes, the "truth" of Marxism is perceptible only to those who accomplish this leap, NOT to any neutral observers. What the EXTERNALITY means here is that this truth is nonetheless UNIVERSAL, not just the "point-of-view" of a particular historical subject: "external" intellectuals are needed because the working class cannot immediately perceive ITS OWN PLACE within the social totality which enables it to accomplish its "mission" - this insight has to be mediated through an external element.

And why not link these two externalities (that of the traumatic experience of the divine Real, and that of the Party) to the third one, that of the ANALYST in the psychoanalytic cure? In all three cases, we are dealing with the same impossibility which bears witness to a materialist obstacle: it is not possible for the believer to "discover God in himself," through self-immersion, by spontaneously realizing its own Self - God must intervene from outside, disturbing our balance; it is not possible for the working class to actualize spontaneously its historical mission - the Party must intervene from outside, shaking it out of its self-indulgent spontaneity; it is not possible for the patient/analyst to analyze himself - in contrast to the Gnostic self-immersion, in psychoanalysis, there is no self-analysis proper, analysis is only possible if a foreign kernel which gives body to the object-cause of the subject's desire. Why, then, this impossibility? Precisely because neither of the three subjects (believer, proletarian, analyst) is a self-centered agent of self-mediation, but a decentered agent struggling with a foreign kernel. God, Analyst, Party - the three forms of the "subject supposed to know," of the transferential object, which is why, in all three cases, one hears the claim "God/Analyst/ the Party is always right"; and, as it was clear already to Kierkegaard, the truth of this statement is always its negative - MAN is always wrong. This external element does not stand for objective knowledge, i.e. its externality is strictly INTERNAL: the need for the Party stems from the fact that the working class is never "fully itself."

A2: PERMUTATION

INSTEAD OF LETTING CAPITALISM GROW THROUGH ITS ASSIMILATION OF A MODEST DEMAND LIKE THE AFF, WE HAVE TO TAKE A RADICAL ACT THAT RISKS THE IMPOSSIBLE TO TOPPLE THE ENTIRE SYMBOLIC ORDER TO SOLVE.

Daly, Northampton Senior Politics Lecturer, **2004**
(Conversations with Zizek, pg. 18-19)

It is along these lines that Zizek affirms the need for a more radical intervention in the political imagination. The modern (Machiavellian) view of politics is usually presented in terms of a basic tension between (potentially) unlimited demands/appetites and limited resources; a view which is implicit in the predominant 'risk society' perspective where the central (almost Habermasian) concern is with more and better scientific information. The political truth of today's world, however, is rather the opposite of this view. That is to say, the demands of the official left (especially the various incarnations of the Third Way left) tend to articulate extremely modest demands in the face of a virtually unlimited capitalism that is more than capable of providing every person on this planet with a civilized standard of living.

For Zizek, a confrontation with the obscenities of abundance capitalism also requires a transformation of the ethico-political imagination. It is no longer a question of developing ethical guidelines within the existing political framework (the various institutional and corporate 'ethical committees') but of developing a politicization of ethics, and ethics of the Real. The starting point here is an insistence on the unconditional autonomy of the subject of accepting that as human beings we are ultimately responsible for our actions and being in the world up to and including the construction of the capitalist system itself. Far from simple norm-making or refining/reinforcing existing social protocol, an ethics of the Real tends to emerge through (norm-breaking and in finding new directions that, by definition, involve traumatic changes: i.e. the Real in genuine ethical challenge. An ethics of the Real does not simply defer to the impossible (or infinite Otherness) as an unsurpassable horizon that already marks every act as a failure, incomplete, and so on. Rather, such an ethics is one that fully accepts contingency but which is nonetheless prepared to risk the impossible in the sense of breaking out of standardized positions. We might say that it is an ethics which is not only politically motivated but which also draws its strength from the political itself.

For Zizek an ethics of the Real (or Real ethics) means that we cannot rely on any form of symbolic Other that would endorse our (in)decisions and (in)actions. For example, the 'neutral' financial data of the stockmarkets; the expert knowledge of Beck's 'new modernity' scientists; the economic and military councils of the New World Order; the various (formal and informal) tribunals of political correctness; or any of the mysterious laws of God, nature or the market. What Zizek affirms is a radical culture of ethical identification for the left in which the alternative forms of militancy must first of all be militant with themselves. That is to say, they must be militant in the fundamental ethical sense of not relying on any external/higher authority and in the development of a political imagination that, like Zizek's own thought, exhorts us to risk the impossible.

AT: PERM

THE PERMUTATION PROVES THAT THERE ARE ERRORS IN THE AFFIRMATIVE ADVOCACY THAT CANNOT BE REHABILITATED. THE PERM LEADS TO EXCLUSION OF DIFFERENCE BECAUSE WE WILL ALWAYS CAPITULATE TO THE DOMINANT ORDER.

ZIZEK 2001 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *Repeating Lenin*. Lacanian Ink, accessed online at www.lacan.com/replenis)

The entire history of the Soviet Union can be comprehended as homologous to Freud's famous image of Rome, a city whose history is deposited in its present in the guise of the different layers of the archaeological remainders, each new level covering up the preceding none, like (another model) the seven layers of Troy, so that history, in its regress towards ever older epoches, proceeds like the archaeologist, discovering new layers by probing deeper and deeper into the ground. Was the (official ideological) history of the Soviet Union not the same accumulation of exclusions, of turning persons into non-persons, of retroactive rewriting of history? Quite logically, the "destalinization" was signalled by the opposite process of "rehabilitation," of admitting "errors" in the past politics of the Party. The gradual "rehabilitation" of the demonized ex-leaders of the Bolsheviks can thus serve as perhaps the most sensitive index of how far (and in what direction) the "destalinization" of the Soviet Union was going. The first to be rehabilitated were the high military leaders shot in 1937 (Tukhachevsky and others); the last to be rehabilitated, already in the Gorbachev era, just before the collapse of the Communist regime, was Bukharin - this last rehabilitation, of course, was a clear sign of the turn towards capitalism: the Bukharin which was rehabilitated was the one who, in the 20s, advocated the pact between workers and peasants (owners of their land), launching the famous slogan "Get rich!" and opposed forced collectivization. Significantly, however, one figure was NEVER rehabilitated, excluded by the Communists as well as by the anti-Communist Russian nationalists: Trotsky, the "wandering Jew" of the Revolution, the true anti-Stalin, the arch-enemy, opposing "permanent revolution" to the idea of "building socialism in one country." One is tempted to risk here the parallel with Freud's distinction between primordial (founding) and secondary repression in the Unconscious: Trotsky's exclusion amounted to something like the "primordial repression" of the Soviet State, to something which cannot ever be readmitted through "rehabilitation," since the entire Order relied on this negative gesture of exclusion. (It is fashionable to claim that the irony of Stalin's politics from 1928 onwards was that it effectively WAS a kind of "permanent revolution," a permanent state of emergency in which revolution repeatedly devoured its own children - however, this claim is misleading: the Stalinist terror is the paradoxical result of the attempt to STABILIZE the Soviet Union into a state like other, with firm boundaries and institutions, i.e. terror was a gesture of panic, a defense reaction against the threat to this State stability.) So Trotsky is the one for whom there is a place neither in the pre-1990 nor in the post-1990 capitalist universe in which even the Communist nostalgics don't know what to do with Trotsky's permanent revolution - perhaps, the signifier "Trotsky" is the most appropriate designation of that which is worth redeeming in the Leninist legacy.

The problem with those few remaining orthodox "Leninists" who behave as if one can simply recycle the old Leninism, continuing to speak on class struggle, on the betrayal by the corrupted leaders of the working masses revolutionary impulses, etc., is that it is not quite clear from which subjective position of enunciation they speak: they either engage themselves in passionate discussions about the past (demonstrating with admirable erudition how and where the anti-Communist "leninologists" falsify Lenin, etc.), in which case they avoid the question of why (apart from a purely historical interest) does this matter at all today, or, the closer they get to contemporary politics, the closer they are to adopting some purely jargonistic pose which threatens no one. When, in the last months of 2001, the Milosevic regime in Serbia was finally toppled, I was asked the same

question from my radical friends from the West: "What about the coal miners whose strike led to the disruption of the electricity supply and thus effectively brought Milosevic down? Was that not a genuine workers' movement, which was then manipulated by the politicians, who were nationalist or corrupted by the CIA?" The same symptomatic point emerges apropos of every new social upheaval (like the disintegration of the Real Socialism 10 years ago): in each of these cases, they identify some working class movement which allegedly displayed a true revolutionary or, at least, Socialist potential, but was first exploited and then betrayed by the procapitalist and/or nationalist forces. This way, one can continue to dream that Revolution is round the corner: all we need is the authentic leadership which would be able to organize the workers' revolutionary potentials. If one is to believe them, Solidarnosc was originally a worker's democratic-socialist movement, later "betrayed" by being its leadership which was corrupted by the Church and the CIA... This mysterious working class whose revolutionary thrust is repeatedly thwarted by the treacherous nationalist and/or liberal politicians is one of the two fetish of most of the remaining Trotskyites - the singular point of disavowal which enables them to sustain their overall interpretation of the state of things. This fetishist fixation on the old Marxist-Leninist frame is the exact opposite of the fashionable talk about "new paradigms," about how we should leave behind the old "zombie-concepts" like working class, etc. - the two complementary ways to avoid the effort to THINK the New which effectively is emerging today. The first thing to do here is to cancel this disavowal by fully admitting that this "authentic" working class simply does not exist. (The other fetish is their belief that things took a bad turn in the Soviet Union only because Lenin did not succeed in joining forces with Trotsky in his effort to depose Stalin.) And if we add to this position four further ones, we get a pretty full picture of the sad predicament of today's Left: the acceptance of the Cultural Wars (feminist, gay, anti-racist, etc., multiculturalist struggles) as the dominant terrain of the emancipatory politics; the purely defensive stance of protecting the achievements of the Welfare State; the naive belief in cybercommunism (the idea that the new media are directly creating conditions for a new authentic community); and, finally, the Third Way, the capitulation itself. The reference to Lenin should serve as the signifier of the effort to break the vicious circle of these false options.

John Berger recently made a salient point apropos of a French publicity poster of the internet investment brokers' company Selftrade: under the image of a hammer and sickle cast in solid gold and embedded with diamonds, the caption reads "And if the stock market profited everybody?" The strategy of this poster is obvious: today, the stock market fulfills the egalitarian Communist criteria, everybody can participate in it. Berger indulges in a simple mental experiment: "Imagine a communications campaign today using an image of a swastika cast in solid gold and embedded with diamonds! It would of course not work. Why? The Swastika addressed potential victors not the defeated. It invoked domination not justice."⁶⁵ In contrast to it, the Hammer and Sickle invoked the hope that "history would eventually be on the side of those struggling for fraternal justice."⁶⁶ The irony is thus that, at the very moment when this hope is officially proclaimed dead by the hegemonic ideology of the "end of ideologies," a paradigmatically "postindustrial" enterprise (is there anything more "postindustrial" than dealing with stocks on the internet?) has to mobilize this dormant hope in order to get its message through.⁶⁷ "Repeating Lenin" means giving new life to this hope which continues to still haunt us.

AT: PERM

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AT: LENIN FAILED

THANK YOU FOR THE HISTORY LESSON; THE STRENGTH OF LENIN WAS THAT HE WASN'T SCARED TO SUCCEED REGARDLESS OF WHETHER HE DID. YOUR RESISTANCE TO THE ALTERNATIVE PROVES THAT THE DISCURSIVE ORDER YOU ENGAGE IN PRECLUDES A WORLD OUTSIDE THE GUISE OF CAPITALISM... WHICH MEANS THAT YOUR PERFORMANCE/PLAN IS ULTIMATELY NOT ONLY UNSUCCESSFUL BUT ALSO PROPS UP THE MACHINATIONS OF CAPITALISM

ZIZEK 2001 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *Repeating Lenin*. Lacanian Ink, accessed online at www.lacan.com/replenis)

Consequently, to REPEAT Lenin does NOT mean a RETURN to Lenin - to repeat Lenin is to accept that "Lenin is dead," that his particular solution failed, even failed monstrously, but that there was a utopian spark in it worth saving.⁶⁸ To repeat Lenin means that one has to distinguish between what Lenin effectively did and the field of possibilities that he opened up, the tension in Lenin between what he effectively did and another dimension, what was "in Lenin more than Lenin himself." To repeat Lenin is to repeat not what Lenin DID, but what he FAILED TO DO, his MISSED opportunities. Today, Lenin appears as a figure from a different time-zone: it's not that his notions of the centralized Party, etc., seem to pose a "totalitarian threat" - it's rather that they seem to belong to a different epoch to which we can no longer properly relate. However, instead of reading this fact as the proof that Lenin is outdated, one should, perhaps, risk the opposite conjecture: what if this impenetrability of Lenin is a sign that there is something wrong with OUR epoch? What if the fact that we experience Lenin as irrelevant, "out of sync" with our postmodern times, impart the much more unsettling message that our time itself is "out of sync," that a certain historical dimension is disappearing from it?⁶⁹ If, to some people, such an assertion appears dangerously close to the infamous Hegel's quip, when his deduction why there should be only eight planets circulating around the Sun was proven wrong by the discovery of the ninth planet (Pluto): "So much worse for the facts!", then we should be ready to fully assume this paradox.

How did the ideology of Enlightenment evolve in the 18th century France? First, there was the epoch of salons, in which philosophers were trying to shock their benefactors, the generous Counts and Countesses, even Kings and Emperatrices (Holbach Frederick the Great, Diderot Catherine the Great), with their "radical" ideas on equality, the origin of power, the nature of men, etc. - all of this remaining a kind of intellectual game. At this stage, the idea that someone could take these ideas literally, as the blueprint for a radical socio-political transformation, would probably shock the ideologists themselves who were either part of the entourage of an enlightened nobleman or lone pathetic figures like Rousseau - their reaction would have been that of Ivan Karamazov, disgusted upon learning that his bastard half-brother and servant acted on his nihilistic ruminations, killing his father. This passage from intellectual game to an idea which effectively "seizes the masses" is the moment of truth - in it, the intellectual gets back his own message in its inverted/true form. In France, we pass from the gentle reflections of Rousseau to the Jacobin Terror; within the history of Marxism, it is only with Lenin that this passage occurs, that the games are REALLY over. And it is up to us to repeat this same passage and accomplish the fateful step from the ludic "postmodern" radicalism to the domain in which the games are over.

There is an old joke about socialism as the synthesis of the highest achievements of the entire hitherto human history: from the prehistoric societies, it took primitivism, from the Ancient world slavery, from medieval society brutal domination, from capitalism exploitation, and from socialism the name...⁷⁰ Does something similar not hold about our attempt to repeat Lenin's gesture? From the conservative cultural criticism, it

takes the idea that today's democracy is no longer the place where crucial decisions are made; from cyberspace ideologists the idea that the global digital network offers a new space of communal life; etc.etc., and from Lenin more or less just the name itself... However, this very fact could be turned in an argument FOR the "return to Lenin": the extent to which the SIGNIFIER "Lenin" retains its subversive edge is easily demonstrated - say, when one makes the "Leninist" point that today's democracy is exhausted, that the key decisions are not taken there, one is directly accused of "totalitarianism"; when a similar point is made by sociologists or even Vaclav Havel, they are praised for the depth of their insight... THIS resistance is the answer to the question "Why Lenin?": it is the signifier "Lenin" which FORMALIZES this content found elsewhere, transforming a series of common notions into a truly subversive theoretical formation.

*

The greatness of Lenin is that he WASN'T AFRAID TO SUCCEED - in contrast to the negative pathos discernible from Rosa Luxemburg to Adorno, where the only authentic act is the true failure, the failure which brings to light the antagonism of the constellation (what, apropos of Beethoven, Adorno says about the two modes of the artistic failure - the unauthentic, due simply to the authors subjective deficiency, and the authentic, which brings to light the limitation of the very objective social constellation - bears also on his own politics⁷¹). In 1917, instead of waiting for the right moment of maturity, Lenin organized a preemptive strike; in 1920, finding himself in a position of the leader of the party of the working class with no working class (most of it being killed in the civil war), he went on organizing a state, i.e. he fully accepted the paradox of the party organizing-creating its base, its working class.

Nowhere is this greatness more palpable than in Lenin's writings of 1917, which cover the span from his initial grasp of the unique revolutionary chance (first elaborated in the "Letters From Afar") to the "Letter to Central Committee Members," which finally convinced the Bolshevik majority that the moment to seize power has arrived. Everything is here, from "Lenin the ingenious revolutionary strategist" to "Lenin of the enacted utopia" (of the immediate abolishing of the state apparatuses). To refer to Kierkegaard, what we are allowed to perceive in these writings is Lenin-in-becoming: not yet "Lenin the Soviet institution," but Lenin thrown into an OPEN situation. Are we, within our late capitalist closure of the "end of history," still able to experience the shattering impact of such an authentic historical openness?

AT: TRANSITIONS/UTOPIA

THIS IS THE POINT...TO ENVISION THAT THE UTOPIAN FUTURE IS ALREADY AT HAND (BUT NOT FULLY HEAR) OH! ANOTHER NET BENEFIT IS THAT WE SUSPEND TEMPORALITY.

ZIZEK 2001 (Slavoj, Slovenian Philosopher. *Repeating Lenin*. Lacanian Ink, accessed online at www.lacan.com/replenis)

Which, then, is the criterion of the political act? Success as such clearly doesn't count, even if we define it in the dialectical way of Merleau-Ponty, as the wager that future will retroactively redeem our present horrible acts (this is how, in his Humanism and Terror, Merleau-Ponty provided one of the more intelligent justifications of the Stalinist terror: retroactively, it will become justified if its final outcome will be true freedom)⁵³; neither does the reference to some abstract-universal ethical norms. The only criteria is the absolutely INHERENT one: that of the ENACTED UTOPIA. In a proper revolutionary breakthrough, the utopian future is neither simply fully realized, present, nor simply evoked as a distant promise which justified present violence - it is rather as if, in a unique suspension of temporality, in the short-circuit between the present and the future, we are - as if by Grace - for a brief time allowed to act AS IF the utopian future is (not yet fully here, but) already at hand, just there to be grabbed. Revolution is not experienced as a present hardship we have to endure for the happiness and freedom of the future generations, but as the present hardship over which this future happiness and freedom already cast their shadow - in it, we ALREADY ARE FREE WHILE FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM, we ALREADY ARE HAPPY WHILE FIGHTING FOR HAPPINESS, no matter how difficult the circumstances. Revolution is not a Merleau-Pontyan wager, an act suspended in the futur antérieur, to be legitimized or delegitimized by the long term outcome of the present acts; it is as it were ITS OWN ONTOLOGICAL PROOF, an immediate index of its own truth.

A2: Permutation

The perm will fail to escape global capital since it will just incorporate their call for solidarity and keep on moving. Only the radical act of our alternative solves.

Zizek, Slovenian Philosopher, 1999

[The Ticklish Subject]

From the standpoint of the post-Marxist anti-essentialist notion of politics as the field of hegemonic struggle with no pre-established rules that would define its parameters in advance, it is easy to reject the very notion of the 'logic of Capital' as precisely the remainder of the old essentialist stance: far from being reducible to an ideologico-cultural effect of the economic process, the passage from standard cultural imperialism to the more tolerant multiculturalism with its openness towards the wealth of hybrid ethnic, sexual, and so on, identities is the result of a long and difficult politico-cultural struggle whose final outcome was in no way guaranteed by the a priori co-ordinates of the 'logic of Capital'.... The crucial point, however, is that this struggle for the politicization and assertion of multiple ethnic, sexual, and other identities always took place against the background of an invisible yet all the more forbidding barrier: the global capitalist system was able to incorporate the gains of the postmodern politics of identities to the extent that they did not disturb the smooth circulation of Capital - the moment some political intervention poses a serious threat to that, an elaborate set of exclusionary measures quashes it.

What about the rather obvious counter-argument that the multiculturalist's neutrality is false, since his or her position silently privileges Eurocentrist content? This line of reasoning is right, but for the wrong reason. The particular cultural background or roots which always support the universal multiculturalist position are not its 'truth', hidden beneath the mask of universality ('multiculturalist universalism is really Eurocentrist...') but, rather, the opposite: the stain of particular roots is the phantasmic screen which conceals the fact that the subject is already thoroughly rootless) that his true position is the void of universality. Let me recall Darian Leader's example of the man in a restaurant with his female companion, who, when asking the waiter for a table, says: 'Bedroom for two, please!' instead of 'Table for two, please!'. One should reverse the standard Freudian explanation ('Of course, his mind was already on the night of sex he planned after the meal!'): this intervention of the subterranean sexual fantasy is, rather, the screen which serves as the defence against the oral drive which actually matters to him more than sex.⁴⁵

In his analysis of the French Revolution of 1848 (in *The Class Struggles in France*), Marx provides a similar example of such a double deception: the Party of Order which took over after the Revolution publicly supported the Republic, yet secretly it believed in Restoration - members used every opportunity to mock Republican rituals and to signal in every possible way where 'their heart was'. The paradox, however, was that the truth of their activity lay in the external form they privately mocked and despised: this Republican form was not a mere semblance beneath which the Royalist desire lurked - rather, it was the secret clinging to Royalism which enabled them to fulfil their actual historical function: to implement bourgeois Republican law and order. Marx himself mentions how members of the Party of Order derived immense pleasure from their occasional Royalist 'slips of the tongue' against the Republic (referring to France as a Kingdom in their parliamentary debates, etc.): these slips of the tongue articulated their phantasmic illusions which served as the screen enabling them to blind themselves to the social reality of what was going on on the surface.

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A2: Alternative leads to violence/Stalinism

These claims are the ultimate blackmail against radical action- they simply exist to defend the existing order and are used as a totalitarian gesture to prohibit radical thinking

Zizek, Institute for Social Studies Senior Researcher, 2000
[Contingency, Hegemony, Universality]

The problem of today's philosophico-political scene is ultimately best expressed by Lenin's old question 'What is to be done?' - how do we reassert, on the political terrain, the proper dimension of the act? The main form of the resistance against the act today is a kind of unwritten *Denkverbot* (prohibition to think) similar to the infamous *Berufsverbot* (prohibition to be employed by any state institution) from the late 1960s in Germany - the moment one shows a minimal sign of engaging in political projects that aim seriously to change the existing order, the answer is immediately: 'Benevolent as it is, this will necessarily end in a new Gulag'. The 'return to ethics' in today's political philosophy shamefully exploits the horrors of Gulag or Holocaust as the ultimate bogey for blackmailing us into renouncing all serious radical engagement. In this way, conformist liberal scoundrels can find (hypocritical satisfaction) in their defence of the existing order: they know there is corruption, exploitation, and so on, but every attempt to change things is denounced as ethically dangerous and unacceptable, recalling the ghosts of Gulag or Holocaust. . . >

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Alternative Solvency

We have to take the risk and radically question the legitimacy of democratic thought- this is the only true revolutionary stance that has any chance at subverting the system

Zizek 2004 [Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle]

Thus the present crisis compels us to rethink democracy itself as today's Master-Signifier. Democracy *qua* ideology functions principally as the space of a virtual alternative, the very prospect of a change in power, the looming possibility of this change, makes us endure the existing power relations – that is to say, these existing relations are stabilized, rendered tolerable, by the false opening. (In a strict homology, subjects accept their economic situation if it is accompanied by an awareness of the possibility of change – 'good luck is just around the corner'.) The opponents of capitalist globalization like to emphasize the importance of keeping the dream alive: global capitalism is not the end of history, it is possible to think and act differently – what, however, if it is this very lure of a possible change which guarantees that nothing will actually change? What if it is only full acceptance of the desperate closure of the present global situation that can push us towards actual change? In this precise way, the virtual alternative displays an actuality of its own; in other words, it is a positive ontological constituent of the existing order.)

'Democracy' is not merely the 'power of, by, and for the people'. It is not enough just to claim that, in a democracy, the will and interests (the two do not in any way automatically coincide) of the large majority determine the state's decisions. Democracy – in the way this term is used today – concerns, above all, formal legalism: its minimal definition is the unconditional adherence to a certain set of formal rules which guarantee that antagonisms are fully absorbed into the agonistic game. 'Democracy' means that, whatever electoral manipulation takes place, every political agent will unconditionally respect the results. In this sense, the US presidential elections of 2000 were effectively 'democratic': despite the obvious electoral manipulations, and the patent meaninglessness of the fact that a couple of hundred Florida votes decided who would be President, the Democratic candidate accepted his defeat. In the weeks of uncertainty after the elections, Bill Clinton made an appropriate acerbic comment: 'The American people have spoken; we just don't know what they said.' This comment should be taken more seriously than it was meant: even now, we do not know – maybe because there was no substantial 'message' behind the result at all.

Those who are old enough still remember the dull attempts of 'democratic socialists' to oppose the vision of authentic socialism to miserable 'really existing socialism' – to such an attempt, the standard Hegelian answer is quite adequate: the failure of reality to live up to its notion always bears witness to the inherent weakness of this notion itself. But why should the same not hold also for democracy itself? Is it also not all too simple to oppose to 'really existing' liberal capitalist democracy a more true 'radical' democracy?

Interestingly enough, there is at least one case in which formal democrats themselves (or, at least, a substantial number of them) would tolerate the suspension of democracy: what if formally free elections were won by an anti-democratic party whose platform promises the abolition of formal democracy? (This did happen in Algeria, among other places, a few of years ago.) In such a case, many a democrat would concede that the people were not yet 'mature' enough to be allowed democracy, and that some kind of enlightened despotism whose aim would be to educate the majority into becoming proper democrats was preferable. A crucial component of any populism is also the dismissal of the formal democratic procedure: even where these rules are still to be respected, it is always made clear that they do not provide the crucial legitimacy to political agents – populism, rather, evokes the direct pathetic link between the charismatic leadership and the crowd, verified through plebiscites and mass gatherings.

This is the sense in which one should render democracy problematic: why should the Left always and unconditionally respect the formal democratic 'rules of the game'? Why should it not – in some circumstances, at least – question the legitimacy of the outcome of a formal democratic procedure? All democratic leftists venerate Rosa Luxemburg's famous 'Freedom is freedom for those who think differently.' Perhaps the time has come to shift the emphasis from 'differently' to 'think': 'Freedom is freedom for those who think differently' – only for those who *really think*, even if they think differently, not for those who just blindly (unthinkingly) act out their opinions. In his famous short poem 'The Solution' (1953; published in 1956), Brecht mocked the arrogance of the Communist *nomenklatura* in the face of the workers' revolt:

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After the uprising of the 17th June
 The Secretary of the Writers Union
 Had leaflets distributed in the *Stalinallee*
 Stating that the people
 Had forfeited the confidence of the government
 And could win it back only
 By redoubled efforts.
 Would it not be easier
 In that case for the government
 To dissolve the people
 And elect another?²⁷

This poem, however, is not only politically opportunistic, the obverse of his letter of solidarity with the East German Communist regime published in *Neues Deutschland* – to put it brutally, Brecht wanted to cover both flanks, to profess his support for the regime as well as to hint at his solidarity with the workers, so that whoever won, he would be on the winning side – but also simply wrong in the theoretico political sense: one should openly admit that it really is a duty – even *the* duty – of a revolutionary party to ‘dissolve the people and elect another’, in other words, to bring about the transubstantiation of the ‘old’ opportunistic people (the inert ‘crowd’) into a revolutionary body aware of its historical tasks. Far from being an easy task, to ‘dissolve the people and elect another’ is the most difficult of all. . . . This means that one should take the risk of radically questioning today’s predominant attitude of (anti-authoritarian tolerance). Surprisingly, it was Bernard Williams who, in his perspicacious reading of David Mamet’s *Oleanna*, outlined the limits of this attitude:

A complaint constantly made by the female character is that she has made sacrifices to come to college, in order to learn something, to be told things that she did not know, but that she has been offered only a feeble permissiveness. She complains that her teacher . . . does not control or direct her enough: he does not tell her what to believe, or even, perhaps, what to ask. He does not exercise authority. At the same time, she complains that he exercises power over her.

This might seem to be a muddle on her part, or the playwright’s, but it is not. The male character has power over her (he can decide what grade she gets), but just because he lacks authority, this power is mere power, in part gender power.²⁸

Power appears (is experienced) ‘as such’ at the very point where it is no longer covered by ‘authority’. There are, however, further complications to Williams’s view. First, ‘authority’ is not simply a direct property of the Master-figure, but an effect of the social relationship between the Master and his subjects: even were the Master to remain the same, it might happen that, because of the change in the socio-symbolic field, his position is no longer perceived as legitimate authority, but as mere illegitimate power (is not such a shift the most elementary gesture of feminism: male authority is suddenly unmasked as mere power?). The lesson of all revolutions from 1789 to 1989 is that such a disintegration of authority, its transformation into arbitrary power, always precedes a revolutionary outbreak. Where Williams is right is in his emphasis on how the very permissiveness of the power-figure, its self-restraint as regards exercising authority by directing and controlling his subject, results in that authority appearing as illegitimate power. Therein lies the vicious cycle of today’s academe: the more professors renounce ‘authoritarian’ active teaching, imposing knowledge and values, the more they are experienced as figures of power. And, as every parent knows, the same goes for parental education: a father who exerts true transferential authority will never be experienced as ‘oppressive’ – on the contrary, it is, a father who tries to be permissive, who does not want to impose his views and values on his children, but allows them to find their own way, who is denounced as exerting power, as being ‘oppressive’

The paradox to be fully endorsed here is that the only way to abolish power relations effectively leads through freely accepted relations of authority: the model of a free collective is not a group of libertines indulging their own pleasures, but an extremely disciplined revolutionary body. The injunction which holds such a collective together is best encapsulated by the logical form of the double negation (prohibition) which, precisely, is not the same as the direct positive assertion. Towards the end of Brecht’s *Die Massnahme*, the Four Agitators declare:

It is a terrible thing to kill.
 But not only others would we kill, but ourselves too if need be
 Since only force can alter this
 Murderous world, as
 Every living creature knows.
 It is still, we said
 Not given to us not to kill.²⁹

A2: Impossible Demands

Impossible demands formed for rejection maintain the system while celebrating our privilege

Zizek 2002 [Welcome to the Desert of the Real!]

In a strict Lacanian sense of the term, we should thus posit that 'happiness' relies on the subject's inability or unreadiness fully to confront the consequences of its desire; the price of happiness is that the subject remains stuck in the inconsistency of its desire. In our daily lives, we (pretend to) desire things which we do not really desire, so that, ultimately, the worst thing that can happen is for us to get what we 'officially' desire. Happiness is thus inherently hypocritical: it is the happiness of dreaming about things we do not really want. When today's Left bombards the capitalist system with demands that it obviously cannot fulfil (Full employment! Retain the welfare state! Full rights for immigrants!), it is basically playing a game of hysterical provocation of addressing the Master with a demand which will be impossible for him to meet, and will thus expose his impotence. The problem with this strategy, however, is not only that the system cannot meet these demands, but that, in addition, those who voice them do not really want them to be realized. For example, when 'radical' academics demand full rights for immigrants and opening of the borders, are they aware that the direct implementation of this demand would, for obvious reasons, inundate developed Western countries with millions of newcomers, thus provoking a violent working-class racist backlash which would then endanger the privileged position of these very academics? Of course they are, but they count on the fact that their demand will not be met – in this way, they can hypocritically retain their clear radical conscience while continuing to enjoy their privileged position. In 1994, when a new wave of emigration from Cuba to the USA was on the

cards, Fidel Castro warned the USA that if they did not stop inciting Cubans to emigrate, Cuba would no longer prevent them from doing it – which the Cuban authorities in effect did a couple of days later, embarrassing the USA with thousands of unwanted newcomers. . . Is this not like the proverbial woman who snapped back at a man who was making macho advances to her: 'Shut up, or you'll have to do what you're boasting about!' In both cases, the gesture is that of calling the other's bluff, counting on the fact that what the other really fears is that one will fully comply with his or her demand. And would not the same gesture also throw our radical academics into a panic? Here the old '68 motto '*Soyons réalistes, demandons l'impossible!*' acquires a new cynical and sinister meaning which, perhaps, reveals its truth: 'Let's be realists: we, the academic Left, want to appear critical (while fully enjoying the privileges the system offers us). So let's bombard the system with (impossible demands): we all know that these demands won't be met, so we can be sure that nothing will actually change, and we'll maintain our privileged status! If someone accuses a big corporation of particular financial crimes, he or she is exposed to risks which can go right up to murder attempts; if he or she asks the same corporation to finance a research project into the link between global capitalism and the emergence of hybrid postcolonial identities, he or she stands a good chance of getting hundreds of thousands of dollars.'