

## THE ŽIŽEKIAN CRITIQUE OF MULTICULTURALISM MULTICULTURALISM VERSUS PAUL?

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KEREKES ERZSÉBET\*

**Abstract** The popularity of Slavoj Žižek is on a continual rise ever since the outbreak of the global financial crisis. This fact seems readily understandable, since he is the representative of a view directed against banks, big capital, and exploitation. Žižek is among those contemporary, anti-postmodernist philosophers, who think that political consequences can be drawn from the Christian message, and that contemporary political philosophy is in need of Christianity. In his work *The Ticklish Subject. The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (1999), following Alain Badiou, Žižek traces a parallel between the American global domination of our time and the late Roman Empire, also a “multiculturalist” global state in which ethnic groups were held together by a non-substantial link (in this case not by capital, but by Roman law). Therefore, what we need today, according to Žižek, is the gesture that would undermine capitalist globalization from the standpoint of a universal Truth, as Pauline Christianity did to the global Roman Empire. The *postmodernist multiculturalism* critiqued by Žižek tolerates the otherness of the Other by eliminating its very essence. According to the (multiculturalist) ethics of tolerance, respect is formal, empty, and devoid of substance: the moral position turns into not judging/not evaluating – e.g. you can do anything you want if it does not concern me –, morality turns into its own opposite.

**Keywords** Apostle Paul, Capital, capitalism, contemporary philosophy, economic globalism, multiculturalism, migrant, postmodern, Žižek.

By way of introduction, let me remark that my research, conducted as a postdoctoral fellow at the Philosophy Institute of the Centre for Social Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, is focused on the contemporary philosophical reception of the Apostle Paul, especially within the work of G. Agamben, A. Badiou and S. Žižek. Slavoj Žižek is a post-Marxist

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Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca; Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest.  
hunyadikzsoka@gmail.com, Kerekes.Erzsebet@btk.mta.hu.

philosopher of Slovenian origin, who applies his psychoanalytic insights to the issues of racism, nationalism, anti-Semitism, totalitarianism, and betrayal.<sup>1</sup> Gábor Sarnyai, in his article entitled *Slavoj Žižek: bohóc vagy látnok? (Slavoj Žižek: Buffoon or Prophet?)*, published in April 2015, states that “the popularity of Žižek is on a continual rise ever since the outbreak of the global financial crisis. This fact seems readily understandable, since he is the representative of a view directed against banks, big capital, and exploitation.”<sup>2</sup> Žižek is among those contemporary, anti-postmodernist<sup>3</sup> philosophers who think that political consequences can be drawn from the Christian message, and that contemporary political philosophy is in need of Christianity. In his work *The Ticklish Subject. The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (1999),<sup>4</sup> following Alain Badiou, Žižek traces a parallel between the American global domination of our time and the late Roman Empire, also a “multiculturalist” global state in which ethnic groups were held together by a non-substantial link (in this case not by capital, but by Roman law). Therefore, what we need today is the gesture that would undermine capitalist globalization from the standpoint of a universal Truth, as Pauline Christianity did to the global Roman Empire. (We would need to break the vicious cycle of globalization and particularization by reconfirming the dimension of universality.) In this book, Žižek analyses – among other writings – the work *La fondation de l’universalisme* (1997)<sup>5</sup> by Alain Badiou; he emphasizes its merits, and compares it with Lacanian psychoanalytical researches. References to Paul have been present ever since in his work – in *The Fragile Absolute, or Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?/A törékeny abszolútum avagy miért érdemes harcolni a keresztény örökségért* (London,

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<sup>1</sup> He comes from the former Yugoslavia, which is a region fraught with ethnic conflicts, similarly to the way in which the first European encounter of Freud and Marx was a result of the Frankfurt School, which was fleeing from Nazi anti-Semitism. See Ferenc Erőss, “Jacques Lacan, avagy a vágy tragédiája”, *Thalassa* 4.2 (1993): 29–44.

<sup>2</sup> Saranyai Gabor, “Slavoj Zizek: bohóc vagy látnok?”, *Magyar Nemzet*, <http://mno.hu/kulfold/slavoj-zizek-bohoc-vagy-latnok-1281596> (accessed on 19 April 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Badiou and Žižek clearly and radically oppose the faith of modern anti-platonists, whose fundamental dogma is that the era in which it was possible to establish a political movement on an eternal metaphysical or transcendent truth is gone once and for all, since the experience of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has shown that the reference to any metaphysical a priori can only result in catastrophic ‘totalitarian’ social effects. Thus, the only solution for anti-platonists is to accept that we live in an age which has been robbed of metaphysical certainties, the era of contingences and conjunctures, or the ‘risk society’, in which politics is a matter of *phronesis*, strategic judgements and dialogue, and not a matter of references to fundamental cognitive insights. In opposition to this postmodernist *doxa*, Badiou, for instance, targets the revival of the politics of universal truth. The work of Badiou on Paul analyses the status of universality (or, how we should establish an authentic universality within our world, which is defined by the coordinates of globalisation and searching for one’s place) and the possibility of the Event.

<sup>4</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London – New York: Verso, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul. La fondation de l’universalisme* (Paris: PUF, 1997).

2000/Budapest 2011), *On Belief* (2001), *The Puppet and the Dwarf – Christianity between Perversion and Subversion* (2009), etc.<sup>6</sup>

Paul was the one to put an end to the expropriation of truth by a collective, be it the people, the city, the region, or social class. He leads us to strictly detach any process of truth from the “cultural” historicity in which common opinion deems it to dissolve. What is it that Paul wants to achieve? His aim is to remove the Gospel from that strict isolation in which it would remain, were it to refer exclusively to the Jewish community. At the same time, his aim is also to prevent the Gospel from being determined by the generalities which happen to be in existence, be they state-related (the categories of Roman law: slaves, women, people of different trades and nationalities, etc.) or ideological (from Greek philosophical discourse). That is to say, Paul ultimately has to impose a universal singularity, both against the accepted abstractions (legal then, and economic nowadays) and against the community or particularist needs. His general approach is the following: if an Event occurred, then Truth is the announcement of it, and the faithful adherence to this announcement. Truth cannot be carried by any of the previously given subsets, nothing which is given historically or through a community can lend its substance to the process of Truth, since this has been written into an essentially subjective announcement. Truth is offered to everyone, its addressee is each individual, without its offering or addressing being limited by the condition of previous affiliations. The terms in which Saint Paul formulated Christian religion do have indeed a universal relevance to any Truth-Event. All Truth-Events lead to a kind of *rebirth/resurrection/revitalization*. This is the experience of each one of us when we are fully committed in our subjectivity to a cause which we deem to be our own, i.e. when we become subjects – the carriers and followers of a (fragile) truth – from the participants of an existential situation.

The question asked by Žižek is whether Christian thought has sufficient force and dynamism to influence the political thought of an age inclined towards pessimism and relativism. Is it possible to find a way out from the so-called postmodern condition? According to him, Christian religion is the only one from which anything new can come, since Christianity is capable of removing ethnic, social, and gender inequalities.<sup>7</sup> Christianity is democratic and revolutionary according to its roots, since through it I can become a direct participant in universality, irrespective of the place that I hold within the global social system. Christ and Paul characterize the commandment of love by saying that it detaches us from anything which can hold us hostage and something in which we are born into, or as a “social-symbolic network”. The perfect freedom of Christian love is egalitarian in such measure that it does not differentiate between masters and slaves, men and women, Greeks and Jews. Its universality

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<sup>6</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute, or Why is the Cristian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso, 2000). *A törékeny abszolútum. Avagy miért érdemes harcolni a keresztény örökségért?* (Budapest: Typotex, 2011), Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief*. New York-London: Routledge, 2001, Žižek, Slavoj: *The Puppet and the Dwarf – Christianity between Perversion and Subversion* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> See Éva Lásd Kocsizky, *Antifilozófusok – huszonöt időszerű kérdése a kereszténységhez* (Budapest: Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, L’Harmattan Kiadó, 2014), 133.

includes the commandment of loving even one's enemy, which Žižek contrasts with the heathenness of fascisms of any kind. Fascism refuses the love of our enemy and it urges us to completely identify ourselves with our ethnic community, thus reverting to heathen morals. The common lesson of psychoanalysis and the Jewish-Christian tradition is that the specifically human calling is associated with the external traumatic encounter with the desire of the Other (and with the impenetrable character of this desire). However, the *postmodernist multiculturalism* critiqued by Žižek tolerates the otherness of the Other by eliminating its very essence.

Multiculturalism is a general concept which contains several efforts aimed at collective recognition. Its objective is the recognition of the identity of the disadvantaged minority groups living in our societies, including the legal confirmation and political recognition of identity.<sup>8</sup> Multiculturalism has had a fashionable subject in later years, and it is the opinion of many people that liberal, leftist intellectuals are unanimously committed to multiculturalism, while right-wing or conservative individuals are more reticent in this domain or outright adversaries of multiculturalism. Žižek, however, is a leftist author who offers an important critique of multiculturalism and liberal multiculturalist tolerance, while highlighting its paradoxes (although he is not necessarily and adversary of it).

Let us see, then, what the leftist Žižek has to hold against multiculturalism, and what are the paradoxes and traps which he emphasizes.

Several arguments can be mentioned in this respect:

1. Multiculturalism misrepresents the mission of the political left. As Žižek himself puts it: "I don't accept as the level of a modern left the so-called identitarian struggles of postmodern multiculturalism: gay rights, ethnic minority demands, tolerance politics, antipatriarchal movements and so on. I am more and more convinced that these are upper-middle-class phenomena which shouldn't be accepted as the horizon of struggle for the left. To

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<sup>8</sup> Those who are in favour of the multicultural value system usually invoke the following arguments: a) after the Second World War, most western states have definitively become countries with many languages, cultures, and religions, due to the now global economic, political etc. migration; b) the minorities and indigenous people who have been previously not recognized and were forced to silence now require recognition from the members of the majority nations, or more exactly, from the states which represent the interests of the latter; c) the postmodern world is, at the same time, also a multicultural world, simultaneously characterized by the renouncing of grand narratives and the universally valid truth, and by ethno-cultural diversity; d) the most varying collective identities (e.g. people with disabilities, homosexuals, religious minorities) have stepped out of their anonymous and isolated worlds, contained "within four walls", and they insist ever more strongly on the right to manifest their collective representations. See Lajos András Kiss, *Slavoj Žižek a multikulturalizmus paradoxonjairól [1]* In: *Liget 2015/1*, [http://liget.org/cikk.php?cikk\\_id=2672](http://liget.org/cikk.php?cikk_id=2672), (accessed on 12 October 2015), according to whom almost everybody accepts, in principle, the justified character of these ambitions and the widening of the politics of recognition – although conservatives are much more reserved about the possibilities of widening the circle of recognition, and generally only take a stand for the recognition of collective identities of the linguistic, cultural, and religious type.

avoid any misunderstanding, I am not opposed to multiculturalism as such; what I am opposed to is the idea that it constitutes the fundamental struggle of today.”<sup>9</sup>

In the third chapter of his book entitled *The Plague of Fantasies, The Culture of Multiculturalism, or Multi-National Capitalism*, Žižek reacts not only to the persistent search for identity by post-communist states, but also to the global changes going on in the world. The fall of communism and the spreading of capitalism on the one side, and the rise of multiculturalism on the other: these are two different, yet strongly related phenomena. In fact, they are related so strongly that one could even argue that multiculturalism is nothing more than a reaction to the worldwide presence of capitalism. According to Žižek, “the problematic of multiculturalism (the hybrid coexistence of diverse cultural life-worlds) which imposes itself today is the form of appearance of its opposite, of the massive presence of capitalism as a *global* world system: it bears witness to the unprecedented homogenization of today’s world. It is in fact as if, since the horizon of social imagination no longer allows us to entertain the idea of an eventual demise of capitalism – since, as we might put it, everybody tacitly accepts that *capitalism is here to stay* – critical energy has found a substitute outlet in fighting for cultural differences which leave the basic homogeneity of the capitalist world-system intact. So we are fighting our PC battles for the rights of ethnic minorities, of gays and lesbians, of different lifestyles, and so forth, while capitalism pursues its triumphant march – and today’s critical theory, in the guise of ‘cultural studies’, is performing the ultimate service for the unrestrained development of capitalism by actively participating in the ideological effort to render its massive presence invisible...”<sup>10</sup>

Thus, unfortunately, the left has renounced its responsibility to exercise economic criticism. The price for the depoliticization of economy is that the field of politics has become in some way depoliticized: political struggle is being transformed into the cultural struggle to recognize marginal identities and to tolerate differences. However, what the left should be concerned with is the model of global capitalism itself. Later, we will come back to this subject (see addendum 1).

2. The (multiculturalist) ethics of tolerance and respect is “fake and patronizing,”<sup>11</sup> because, according to it, respect is formal, empty, and devoid of substance. Žižek’s argument is relatively straightforward: when the par excellence moral position turns into not judging/not evaluating – e.g. you can do anything you want if it does not concern me –, morality turns into its own opposite, since taking someone seriously means to be critical and considering the personal to be fit for critical encounter. Žižek asks the following question: can someone simply learn to respect the Hindu custom of burning the wife?<sup>12</sup> Is it not the case that we should be

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<sup>9</sup> *Conversation with Žižek*, ed. Glyn Daly (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 144.

<sup>10</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London; New York: Verso, 1997), 88.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>12</sup> In his study entitled *Slavoj Žižek a multikulturalizmus paradoxonjairól (Slavoj Žižek on the Paradoxes of Multiculturalism)*, Lajos András Kiss interprets a particular institution of Hindu culture, the Sati. It is a custom still practiced today that widowed women are required to perform the “compulsorily voluntary” ritual self-immolation. This “barbarous and inhuman” practice, which flagrantly disrespects universal

able to generate a critical dialogue, which simultaneously also implies certain risks for all involved parties, associated with the attempt to challenge the other's opinion about the definition of good government (etc.), since the involved person risks that it will actually be his or her own opinion which will change. (The principle of tolerance, which is the result of the European religious wars, originally did not make us liable to accept and applaud other people's beliefs, but merely to respect the freedom of conscience of other people.)

One should not forget the fact that the most inhumane customs can be justified by the appeal to multiculturalism. Žižek reminds us of the arguments for the Southern-African apartheid regime in order to demonstrate how multiculturalist argumentation can be turned against itself. In the 1980s, the representatives of the white minority in South-Africa justified the disenfranchisement of the black through the very much multiculturalist argument that the liberal political regime is ultimately an invention of "white European males", and if it were extended to the society of the blacks, which functions according to traditional principles, then this would destroy the traditional structure of the tribal society, which would deprive humanity of an autonomous and irreplaceable value.

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human rights, was once prohibited by the English. According to the Indian Gayatri Spivak, the prohibition by the English authorities is the result of a typical western cliché: "white men have to rescue coloured women from the clutches of coloured men." However, the argumentation based on universal human rights also performs an epistemological violation of the submitted Hindu women. It complements the familiar authority of coloured men with the hegemonic tendency of white European culture and its self-assuredness with which it decides what universal human freedom means. Thus, Indian women live in a dual grip: they must either step into the trap of a patriarchal society or of western imperialism. According to Spivak, we have two radically differing types of discourse, since both perspectives define "femininity" according to their own criteria. Finally, the Indian woman philosopher invokes an argument in defence of the Sati, which can also be compatible with the logic of westerners. She takes as her starting point the obvious fact that solidarity is also a component of Western thought. However, for western people this exclusively means Christian solidarity or solidarity based on social class, the implementation of which often requires the sacrifice of human life. Spivak invokes the case of the Russian anarchist women who were willing to commit suicide attacks in order to destroy the hated Tsarist regime. However, if we are capable of stepping beyond our ethno-cultural determinations, i.e. we are able to widen the concept of solidarity, thereby accepting not only the existence and values of class-based, but also those of family solidarity, why could we not view Sati as a heroic sacrifice? Thus, it could be regarded as a necessary step, through which we come closer to a truth of a higher order. In traditional India and within the holy texts of Hinduism, women are viewed as 'the object of men', and the concepts of 'married woman' and 'good wife' are linked. The self-sacrifice of such a woman can be viewed as a compensation offered to the gods, i.e. a gesture which liberates the female body. The significance of the message is thus: "Burn yourself on the funeral pyre of your husband, so that you can gain back your female body within the cycle of eternal rebirth." Spivak's argumentation is paradoxical because she, as an Indian woman, tries to protect one of the elements – which can be qualified at least as bizarre – of her own cultural tradition. In this respect, she is the representative of a "subaltern particularist" viewpoint, while at the same time as a learned theoretician, who is intimately familiar with Western philosophy, she tries to present the Sati as an "event" which could be acceptable also to the universalist perspective.

In *The Ticklish Subject*<sup>13</sup>, Žižek argues that the falsity of elitist multicultural liberalism lies in the tension between content and form, which already characterized the grand ideological project of Freemasonry: the doctrine of the universal brotherhood of men, based on the clarity of reason, clearly contradicts the particular form of expression and organization (the initiation rituals of a secret society). The latter falsifies the positive doctrine. The liberal attitude of contemporary 'political correctness' functions similarly: it views itself as something which transcends the limits of its ethnic identity (e.g. world citizen status, which is not anchored within any particular ethnic community). It functions as a narrow, elitist, upper middle class circle, as opposed to the majority of commoners, who they despise, because these people remain the prisoners of their own narrow ethnic or community framework.

No wonder, then, that liberal multiculturalist tolerance finds itself in a kind of vicious circle: it simultaneously recognizes too much and too little of the particularity of the "other" culture:

- a) According to Žižek, the multiculturalist tolerates the Other if he or she is not a real Other, but merely the aseptic and sterile Other of the ecological wisdom and charming rites of pre-modernity. At the same time, as soon as it has to encounter the real Other (e.g. female circumcision or imposing the veil upon women, the torture of the enemy, etc.), or in other words, as soon as multiculturalists have to face the way in which the Other lives with its own cultural particularities and how it regulates its own *jouissance*, tolerance quickly comes to its limits. Multiculturalism is thus a kind of hobby which can be associated with the peculiar transformation of the postmodern worldview: it is a symbolical form of the possession of the object which is devoid of substance. It belongs to the same category as decaffeinated coffee, non-alcoholic beer, cake without sugar and sexual love without the use of the sexual organs: as everything without everything. The postmodern multiculturalist tolerates the otherness of the Other through eliminating its very essence.
- b) At the same time, the tolerant multiculturalist liberal sometimes tolerates even the most brutal violations of human rights, or hesitates to condemn these, since he is anxious about being charged with the imposition of his own values on others. Is it not a "fake" tolerance if multiculturalists remind us that we should not impose upon others our own Eurocentrist concepts of human rights? This is the view which is also cited by the representatives of multinational Capital in order to legitimate the fact that 'business comes first'.

If the former is incapable of understanding the specific cultural *jouissance*, which a victim can also find within the practice of another culture, which seems to us cruel and barbaric (e.g. the victims of female circumcision often perceive the act as a way of recovering their own status as women), the latter omits to recognize the fact that the Other is also divided in itself, and the members of the other culture are also far from simply identifying themselves with their own customs, they can gain distance to these

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<sup>13</sup> The following discussion is based on the analysis published in Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London – New York: Verso, 1999), 171–245.

and rebel against them. In this case, invoking the western concept of universal human rights could act as a catalyst which could mobilize people and create an authentic rebellion against the oppression of one's own culture. In other words, there is no happy middle way between 'too much' and 'not enough'.

Does this mean that the solution would consist in recognizing the hybrid character of any of the described realities? It would be all too easy to eulogize the hybrid character of the postmodern migrant subject, which is no more related to specific roots and floats freely between different cultural circles. Unfortunately, two completely different social and political levels are condensed here according to Žižek: 1. On the one hand, the upper middle class academic, who would always need the adequate visa in order to unproblematically cross the border in order to conduct his (academic, financial, etc.) business, and can thus enjoy the differences. 2. On the other hand, the poor (im)migrant worker, who was forced out of his home by political power or is the victim of ethnic or religious violence, for whom the eulogized hybridity is a very much sensitive and traumatic experience of the fact that his status can never be properly settled and legalized; for this subject, even the seemingly simple things, such as crossing the border or reuniting with his family can be experiences filled with anxiety and require great effort. For this second kind of subject, it is a traumatic shock to be rootless and removed from one's traditional lifestyle, which destabilizes his or her entire existence. It would be cynical to tell such people that they should enjoy hybridity and the lack of a fixed identity in one's everyday life, the fact that their existence is a migrant one and never identical with itself, etc.: that which represents the most painful and desperate experience for such a subject, the experience of exclusion and the impossibility of participating in the life of its own community, can become eulogized as the last manifestation of the subversive machinery from the external, normal, and completely adapted postmodernist theoretician (see the celebration of the schizoid subject by Deleuze and Guattari, whose rhyptomatically atomised existence provokes as a reaction the protection of paranoid, 'proto-fascist', and fixed identity).

**Addendum 1:** We noted that what we should rather be worried about is the model of economic globalism itself. For instance, we should talk about the way in which the universalism of Capital relates to the form of the nation-state in our capitalist age. This relationship can perhaps best be described as "auto-colonization", according to Žižek: with the direct multinational functioning of Capital, we are no longer confronted with the standard opposition between the metropolis and the colonized countries. A global firm removes its umbilical cord, which tied it to the nation state, and treats its own country of origin as yet another territory to be colonized. The new multinational companies manifest the same kind of attitude toward the French or American local population as toward the Mexican, Brazilian, or Taiwanese population. In *The Ticklish Subject*, Žižek speaks about three stages of capitalism:

- a) In the beginning, there was (ideally, of course) the capitalism limited by the nation state and the international trade system between nation states, which completed it.



- b) Then came the colonizing relationship, within which the colonizing country submits and exploits the colonized country economically, culturally, and politically.
- c) The final moment of this process is the paradox of colonization in which there are only colonies and no more colonizing countries anymore. The colonizing power is not a nation state any more, but the global firm itself. The ideal ideological form of this global capitalism is multiculturalism, i.e. the attitude which, from its empty global position, treats any and all local cultures as the colonizer treats the colonized people, the indigenous locals, whose *surplus* has to be carefully studied and respected.

According to Žižek, the relationship between traditional imperialist colonization and global capitalist self-colonization is the same as the relationship between western cultural imperialism and multiculturalism. As global capitalism brings with itself the paradox of colonization without the colonizing nation state as the metropolis, multiculturalism also leads to patronizing Eurocentric distance and/or respect towards local cultures without being rooted in its own specific culture. In other words, according to Žižek, multiculturalism is a denied, introverted, self-referential and racist form, or a 'long-range racism', which respects the identity of the Other and conceives of this Other as a closed-down, 'authentic' community, from which the multiculturalist keeps his distance due to his own privileged universal position. Multiculturalism is a kind of racism, which empties its own position of all positive content (the multiculturalist is not a direct racist, he does not oppose the particular values of his own culture to those of the Other's culture). Nevertheless, the multiculturalist protects his position as a privileged, empty standpoint of universality, from which one would be able to value and devalue other particular cultural characteristics – the multiculturalist respect of the specificity of the Other is nothing else than a form of imposing one's own superiority.

The struggle to affirm ethnic, sexual, and other identities has always had an invisible and forgotten barrier. The global capitalist system was able to incorporate the gains of the postmodernist politics of identities up to the point to which these did not bother the smooth circulation of Capital. At the moment when some political interventions pose a serious danger to this, it is disarmed with an already worked-out package of exclusionary measures.

The leading figures of global capitalism sometimes “confer a favour” and generously support humanitarian campaigns – which are otherwise honourable and deserve our recognition –, e.g. the activity of the organization “Doctors Without Borders”, the actions of Greenpeace, and the various feminist and anti-racist movements. The alternative and humanitarian organisations are mostly recognized by the media when they organize actions rich in visual elements and produce only hardly noticeable changes. Žižek does not say that it is always and necessarily a pointless endeavour to stand up for oppressed minorities. However, we need to differentiate between “critical multiculturalism” and “corporate multiculturalism”. It is beyond debate that there are certain authentic social movements which fight against exploitation – e.g. the union of the Mexican agricultural workers. However, the risk-free, “weekend” multiculturalism, which in recent decades dominates the intellectual and academic circles in America, has no critical power.

As Žižek sees it, the increasing globalization of world economy will exacerbate social apartheid. He envisions a world in which more and more people will live in tin sheds and in ghettos, while the major part of income will be concentrated in the hands of the super-rich. In his interview given to *Der Spiegel*<sup>14</sup> he went so far as to state that the economic crisis will turn into a political crisis – which will primarily affect us Europeans. What can and should we do in this situation? Žižek asks for more time to more closely analyse the situation and to create the really modern and efficient theoretical framework of an anti-capitalist strategy (since, before we act, we should learn to think and analyse).<sup>15</sup>

**Addendum 2:** Let us now return to the relationship between fundamentalism and postmodern multiculturalism. Žižek notes that people nowadays speak about so-called fundamentalism, the basic formula of which is the strengthening of the identity of one's own group and the practice of exclusion of the other groups. Thus, France strengthens French identity (against Algerian immigrants), America strengthens American identity against Spanish immigrants, and Slovenia strengthens Slovenian identity against the excessive presence of the Southerners who come from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. At the same time, there is also talk about postmodern multicultural identity politics, the objective of which is the tolerant coexistence of 'hybrid' lifestyle groups. The latter are divided into endless subgroups (Spanish women, black homosexuals, white males who have AIDS, lesbian mothers, etc.). These constantly proliferating groups and subgroups with their hybrid and fluid identities (each of which emphasizes its claim to recognition) can only be conceived of with the background of capitalist globalization. Their sense of group-belonging, be it ethnic or otherwise, is influenced precisely by capitalist globalisation: the sole link between the many groups is Capital itself, which is always ready to satisfy the needs of any group or subgroup (e.g. gay tourism, Spanish music, etc.). Thus, ultimately, the opposition between fundamentalism and postmodernist plural identity politics is false, according to Žižek. A multiculturalist can perceive as attractive the most fundamentalist ethnic identity, but only insofar as it represents the identity of the presumably authentic Other (e.g. native American tribal identity); and a fundamentalist group can easily adopt in its social functioning the postmodernist strategy of identity politics, presenting itself as one of the endangered minorities, simply in order to conserve its specific way of life and cultural identity. Consequently, the dividing line is merely formal, and it depends on the perspective of the observer who views the movements of the conservation of group identity.<sup>16</sup>

As a conclusion, we can note that Žižek's method is parallaxic. "Parallaxis" is a term adopted from physics, which means that a certain object changes as a result of the displacement of the observer, becoming almost another object. The phenomenon is also

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<sup>14</sup> "Unsere Trägheit ist die größte Gefahr," in *Der Spiegel*, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-132327446.html>, (accessed on 14 March 2015).

<sup>15</sup> See also Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (Verso Books, 2010) / *Hogyan éljünk az apokaliptisz idején?* Which, in five chapters, presents the decline of capitalism, leading to an apocalypse.

<sup>16</sup> Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 210.

recognized by psychology. (Outside a certain viewing range, we see the image as a rabbit. Then, when we move a few steps closer, we recognize that it was a duck.) Similarly, Žižek also advises the reader to constantly shift his or her position, in order to try to interpret things from different perspectives.