A Leftist Plea for "Eurocentrism"

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Politics and Its Disavowals

When one says *Eurocentrism,* every self-respecting postmodern leftist intellectual has as violent a reaction as Joseph Goebbels had to culture—to reach for a gun, hurling accusations of protofascist Eurocentrist cultural imperialism. However, is it possible to imagine a leftist appropriation of the European political legacy?

Let us begin with the question, What is politics proper?[1] It is a phenomenon that appeared for the first time in ancient Greece when the members of the demos (those with no firmly determined place in the hierarchical social edifice) presented themselves as the representatives, the stand-ins, for the whole of society, for the true universality ("we—the 'nothing,' not counted in the order—are the people, we are all, against others who stand only for their particular privileged interest"). Political conflict proper thus involves the tension between the structured social body, where each part has its place, and the part of no-part, which unsettles this order on account of the empty principle of universality, of the principled equality of all men qua speaking beings, what Étienne Balibar calls *égaliberté.*[2] Politics proper thus always involves a kind of short circuit

1. I rely here on Jacques Rancière, *La Mésentente: Politique et philosophie* (Paris, 1995). The present essay develops further the ideas first elaborated in Slavoj Žižek, "Multiculturalism, or, The Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism," *New Left Review* 225 (Sept.–Oct. 1997): 28–51.

2. See Étienne Balibar, *La Crainte des masses: Politique et philosophie avant et après Marx* (Paris, 1997).

between the universal and the particular; it involves the paradox of a singular that appears as a stand-in for the universal, destabilizing the "natural" functional order of relations in the social body. This *singulier universel* is a group that, although without any fixed place in the social edifice (or, at best, occupying a subordinated place), not only demands to be heard on equal footing with the ruling oligarchy or aristocracy (that is, to be recognized as a partner in political dialogue and the exercise of power) but, even more, presents itself as the immediate embodiment of *society as such,* in its universality, against the particular power interests of aristocracy or oligarchy. This identification of the nonpart with the whole, of the part of society with no properly defined place (or which resists its allocated subordinated place) with the universal, is the elementary gesture of politicization, discernible in all great democratic events, from the French Revolution (in which the Third Estate proclaimed itself identical to the nation as such against the aristocracy and clergy) to the demise of European socialism, in which groups such as the Czech Civic Forum proclaimed themselves representative of the entire society against the party *nomenklatura.*

The political struggle proper is therefore never simply a rational debate between multiple interests but, simultaneously, the struggle for one's voice to be heard and recognized as that of a legitimate partner. When the excluded, from the Greek demos to Polish workers, protested against the ruling elite (the aristocracy or *nomenklatura*), the true stakes were not only their explicit demands (for higher wages, better working conditions, and so forth) but their very right to be heard and recognized as an equal participant in the debate. In Poland, the *nomenklatura* lost the moment it had to accept Solidarity as an equal partner. In this precise sense, politics and democracy are synonymous: the basic aim of antidemocratic politics always and by definition is and was depoliticization, that is, the unconditional demand that things should return to normal, with each individual doing his or her particular job. Jacques Rancière, of course, emphasizes how the line of separation between what he calls policing (in the broad sense of maintaining social order, the smooth running of the social machine) and politics proper is always blurred and contested. In the Marxist tradition, for instance, *proletariat* can be read as the subjectivization of the part of no-part that elevates its injustice into the ultimate test of univer-

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sality and, simultaneously, as the operator that will bring about the establishment of a postpolitical, rational society.[3]

It is thus politicization that reemerged violently in the disintegration of Eastern European socialism. From my own political past, I remember how, after four journalists were arrested and brought to trial by the Yugoslav army in Slovenia in 1988, I participated in the Committee for the Protection of the Human Rights of the Four Accused. Officially, the goal of the committee was just to guarantee fair treatment for the journalists; however, the committee turned into the major oppositional political force, practically the Slovenian version of the Czech Civic Forum or the East German Neues Forum, the body that coordinated democratic opposition, a de facto representative of civil society. Four items made up the program of the committee: the first three directly concerned the accused, while the devil residing in the details, of course, was the fourth item, which said that the committee wanted to clarify the entire background of the arrest of the four accused and thus to contribute to creating the circumstances in which such arrests would no longer be possible—a coded way of saying that we wanted the abolishment of the existing socialist system. Our demand—"Justice for the accused four!"—started to function as the metaphoric condensation of the demand for the global overthrow of the socialist regime. For that reason, in almost daily negotiations with the committee, Communist Party officials were always accusing us of having a hidden agenda, claiming that the liberation of the accused four was not our true goal, that is, that we were exploiting and manipulating the arrest and trial for other, darker political goals. In short, the Communists wanted to play the so-called rational, depoliticized game: they wanted to deprive the slogan "Justice for the accused four!" of its explosive general connotation and to reduce it to its literal meaning, which concerned merely a minor legal matter; they cynically claimed that it was we, the committee, who were behaving undemocratically and playing with the fate of the accused, coming up with global pressure and blackmailing strategies instead of focusing on the particular problem of their plight.

Let us take an example from the opposite part of the world, from

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3. Sometimes the shift from politics proper to policing can be simply a matter of a change from the definite to the indefinite article, like the East German crowds demonstrating against the communist regime in the last days of the GDR. First they shouted "We are *the* people!" ("Wir sind das Volk!"), thereby performing the gesture of politicization at its purest. They, the excluded counterrevolutionary "scum" of the official whole of the people, with no proper place in official space (or, more precisely, with only titles such as "counterrevolutionaries," "hooligans," or, at best, "victims of bourgeois propaganda," reserved for their designation), claimed to stand for *the* people, for "all." However, a couple of days later, the slogan changed into "We are *a/one* people!" ("Wir sind ein Volk!"), clearly signalling the closure of the momentary authentic political opening, the reappropriation of the democratic impetus by the thrust towards reunification of Germany, which meant rejoining West Germany's liberal-capitalist police/political order.

Japan, where the caste of the untouchables is called the *burakumin:* those who have contact with dead flesh (butchers, leatherworkers, gravediggers), who are sometimes even referred to as *eta,* "much filth." Even now, in the supposedly enlightened present, when they are no longer openly despised, they are silently ignored. Not only do companies still avoid hiring them and parents refuse to allow their children to marry them but, under the "politically correct" pretense of not offending them, ignoring the issue is the preferred course. The recently deceased author Sue Sumii, in her great series of novels, *The River with No Bridge,* used a reference to the *burakumin* to expose the meaninglessness of the entire Japanese caste hierarchy. Significantly, her primordial traumatic experience was a shock that occurred when, as a child, she witnessed how, in order to honor the emperor, one of her relatives scratched the toilet he used to preserve a piece of his shit as a sacred relic. This excremental identification of the *burakumin* is crucial: when Sumii saw her relative cherishing the emperor's excrement, her conclusion was that, following the tradition of the king's two bodies, in which the king's body stands for the social body as such, the *burakumin* as the excrement of the social body should also be cherished in the same way. In other words, Sumii took the structural homology between the emperor's two bodies more literally and further than usual: even the lowest part, the excrement, of the emperor's body has to be reduplicated in his other, sublime body, which stands for the body of society. Her predicament was similar to that of Plato, who in *Parmenides* bravely confronts the embarrassing problem of the exact scope of the relationship between eternal forms/ideas and their material copies: Which material objects are ontologically covered by eternal ideas as their models? Is there also an eternal idea of so-called low objects such as mud, filth, or excrement? However, the crucial point and the proof of the nonpolitical, corporate functioning of Japanese society is the fact that, although voices like that of Sumii are heard on their behalf, the *burakumin* did not actively *politicize* their destiny, did not constitute their position as that of *singulier universel,* claiming that, precisely as the part of no-part, they stand for the true universality of Japanese society.

Although politics proper is thus something specifically "European," the entire history of European political thought is ultimately nothing but a series of disavowals of the political moment, of the proper logic of political antagonism. There are four main versions of this disavowal:

> *Arche-politics:* the "communitarian" attempt to define a traditional, close, organically structured, homogeneous social space that allows for no void in which the political moment or event can emerge.
> *Parapolitics:* the attempt to depoliticize politics. One accepts the political conflict but reformulates it into a competition, within the representational space, between acknowledged parties/agents for

the (temporary) occupation of the place of executive power. This parapolitics, of course, has a series of different successive versions: the main rupture is that between its classical formulation and its modern Hobbesian version, which focuses on the problematic of social contract, of the alienation of individual rights in the emergence of sovereign power. Habermasian or Rawlsian ethics are perhaps the last philosophical vestiges of this attitude: the attempt to deantagonize politics by way of formulating clear rules to be obeyed so that the agonistic procedure of litigation does not explode into politics proper.

The Marxist (or utopian socialist) *metapolitics:* political conflict is fully asserted, *but* as a shadow theater in which events whose proper place is in another scene (that of economic processes) are played out. The ultimate goal of true politics is thus its self-cancellation, the transformation of administration of people into administration of things within a fully self-transparent rational order of a collective will. (More precisely, Marxism is here ambiguous since the very term *political economy* also opens up a space for the opposite gesture of introducing politics into the very heart of the economy, that is, of denouncing the apolitical character of the economic processes as the supreme ideological illusion. Class struggle does not express some objective economic contradiction; it is the very form of existence of this contradiction.)

The *ultrapolitics* of Carl Schmitt: the attempt to depoliticize the conflict by way of bringing it to extremes, via the direct militarization of politics. In ultrapolitics, the repressed political returns in the guise of the attempt to resolve the deadlock of the political conflict by its false radicalization—that is, by reformulating it as a war between us and them, our enemy, where there is no common ground for symbolic conflict. It is deeply symptomatic, for example, that instead of class *struggle* the radical Right speaks of class (or sexual) *warfare.*

What we have in all four cases is thus an attempt to gentrify the properly traumatic dimension of the political. Something emerged in ancient Greece under the name of the demos demanding its rights, and, from the very beginning (that is, from Plato's *Republic* on) to the recent revival of liberal political philosophy, political philosophy itself was an attempt to suspend the destabilizing potential of the political, to disavow and/or regulate it in one way or another: by bringing about a return to a prepolitical social body, by fixing the rules of political competition, and so forth. Political philosophy is thus, in all its different shapes, a kind of defense formation, and perhaps its typology could be established by reference to the different modalities of defense against some traumatic experience in psychoanalysis.[4] Arche-, para-, meta-, and ultrapolitics

4. The metaphoric frame that we use in order to account for the political process is thus never innocent and neutral; it schematizes the concrete meaning of politics. Ultrapolitics has recourse to the model of war: politics is conceived as a form of social warfare, as the

form a kind of Greimasian logical square in which arche- and ultra- are the two faces of the traditionalist attitude (self-enclosed community versus war of a community against external enemies), and para- and meta- the two versions of modern politics (democratic formal rules versus the notion that this kind of democratic game just expresses and/or distorts the level of prepolitical socioeconomic processes at which things really happen). On the other axis, both meta- and ultrapolitics involve the notions of insurpassable struggle, conflict, and antagonism against the assertion of harmonious collaboration in arche- and parapolitics.

From Politics to Postpolitics

Crucial here is Rancière's critical distance towards Marxist metapolitics. The key feature of metapolitics is that, to put it in the terms of Jacques Lacan's matrix of four discourses, the place of the agent is occupied by *knowledge*.[5] Marx presented his position as *scientific* materialism, which is to say that metapolitics is a politics that legitimizes itself by means of a direct reference to the scientific status of its knowledge. (It is this knowledge that enables metapolitics to draw a line of distinction between those immersed in politico-ideological illusions and the party, which grounds its historical intervention in knowledge of effective socioeconomic processes.) This knowledge (about class society and relations of production in Marxism) suspends the classic opposition of *Sein* and *Sollen*, of *Being* and the *Ought*, of that which Is and the ethical Ideal. The ethical Ideal towards which the revolutionary subject strives is directly grounded in (or coincides with) the "objective," "disinterested" scientific knowledge of social processes. This coincidence opens up a space for totalitarian violence since, in this way, acts that run against the elementary norms of ethical decency can be legitimized as grounded in (insight into) historical necessity (say, the mass killing of members of the bourgeois class is grounded in the scientific insight that this class is already in itself condemned to disappear, past the moment in which it played a progressive role). Therein resides the difference between the standard, destructive, even murderous dimension of strictly adhering to the ethical Ideal, and modern totalitarianism. The terrorism of the Jacobins in the French Revolution, grounded in their strict adherence to the ideal of *égaliberté*, that

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relationship to "them," to an enemy. Arche-politics today usually has recourse to a medical model: society is a corporate body, an organism, and social divisions are like illnesses of this organism; that is, what we should fight, our enemy, is a cancerous intruder, a pest, a foreign parasite to be exterminated if the health of the social body is to be reestablished. Parapolitics uses a model of agonistic competition, which follows some commonly accepted, strictly established rules, much like a sporting event. Postpolitics involves the model of business negotiation and strategic compromise.

5. See Jacques Lacan, *L'Envers de la psychanalyse: 1969–1970* (Paris, 1991).

is, in their attempt to realize directly this ideal, to impose it onto reality, this coincidence of the purest idealism with the most destructive violence, analyzed by Hegel in the famous chapter of his *Phenomenology of Spirit* on the absolute terror, is not enough to explain twentieth-century totalitarianism. What the Jacobins lacked was the reference to objective or neutral scientific knowledge of history to legitimize their exercise of unconditional power. It is only the Leninist revolutionary, not yet the Jacobin, who thus occupies the properly perverted position of the pure instrument of historical necessity, made accessible by means of scientific knowledge.

Rancière follows here Claude Lefort's insight into how the space for (Communist) totalitarianism was opened by the "democratic invention" itself: totalitarianism is an inherent perversion of democratic logic.[6] First, we have the traditional master who grounds his authority in some transcendent reason (divine right, for example). What becomes visible with the democratic invention is the gap that separates the positive person of the master from the place he occupies in the symbolic network; with the democratic invention the place of power is posited as originally *empty*, occupied only temporarily and in a contingent way by different subjects. In other words, it now becomes visible that (to paraphrase Marx) people do not treat somebody as king because he is in himself king; he is king *because* and *as long as* people treat him as king. Totalitarianism takes into account this rupture accomplished by the democratic invention; the totalitarian master fully accepts the logic, "I am master only insofar as you treat me as one"; that is, his position involves no reference to some transcendent ground. On the contrary, he emphatically tells his followers, "In myself I am nothing; my whole strength derives from you. I am only the embodiment of your deepest strivings; the moment I lose my roots in you, I am lost." His entire legitimacy derives from his position as a pure servant of the people. The more he "modestly" diminishes and instrumentalizes his role, the more he emphasizes that he simply expresses and realizes the strivings of the people itself, which is the true master, the more all-powerful and untouchable he becomes, since, in this case, any attack on him is effectively an attack on the people itself, on its members' innermost longings. The people is thus split into actual individuals (prone to treason and all kinds of human weaknesses) and the People, embodied in the master. So perhaps these three logics (that of the traditional master; of the democratic, regulated fight for the empty place of power; of the totalitarian master) fit the three modes of the disavowal of politics conceptualized by Rancière: the traditional master functions within the space of arche-politics; democracy involves parapolitics, that is, the gentrification of politics proper in regulated agon (the rules of

6. See Claude Lefort, *L'Invention démocratique: Les Limites de la domination totalitaire* (Paris, 1981).

elections and representative democracy, and so forth); and the totalitarian master is only possible within the space of metapolitics.[7]

Rancière is thus right to emphasize the radical ambiguity of the Marxist notion of the gap between formal democracy (the rights of man, political freedom, and so forth) and the economic reality of exploitation and domination. One can read this gap between the appearance of *égaliberté* and the social reality of economic and cultural (among other) differences in the standard, metapolitical, "symptomatic" way (the form of universal rights, equality, freedom, and democracy is just a necessary but illusory form of expression of its concrete social content, the universe of exploitation and class domination). Or one can read it in the much more subversive sense of a tension in which the appearance of *égaliberté*, precisely, is *not* merely an appearance but evinces an effectivity of its own that allows it to set in motion the process of rearticulating actual socioeconomic relations by way of their progressive politicization (why should women not vote? why should conditions at the workplace not be of public political concern? and so forth). One is tempted to use here the old Levi-Straussian term *symbolic efficiency:* the appearance of *égaliberté* is a symbolic fiction that, as such, possesses actual efficiency of its own. One should resist the properly cynical temptation of reducing it to a mere illusion that conceals a different actuality.

Crucial here is the distinction between appearance and the postmodern notion of the simulacrum as that which is no longer clearly distinguishable from the real.[8] The notion of the political as the domain of appearance (opposed to the social reality of class and other distinctions, for example, those of society as the articulated social body) has nothing in common with the postmodern notion that we are entering the era of universalized simulacra, in which reality itself becomes indistinguishable from its simulated double. The nostalgic longing for the authentic experience of being lost in the deluge of simulacra (detectable in Paul Virilio's work) as well as the postmodern assertion that the brave new world of universalized simulacra is the sign that we are finally getting rid of the metaphysical obsession with authentic Being (detectable in the writing of Gianni Vattimo) both miss the distinction between simulacrum and appearance: what gets lost in today's plague of simulations is not the firm, true, nonsimulated Real, but *appearance itself.* To put it in Lacanian terms: the simulacrum is imaginary (illusion), while appearance is symbolic (fiction); when the specific dimension of symbolic appearance starts to disintegrate, imaginary and real become more and more indistinguishable. The key to today's universe of simulacra, in which the real is less and less

7. Perhaps the distinction between the communist and the fascist masters resides in the fact that—in spite of all the talk about racial science and so forth—the innermost logic of fascism is not metapolitical, but ultrapolitical: the fascist master is a warrior in politics.
    8. See Rancière, *La Mésentente,* pp. 144–46.

distinguishable from its imaginary simulation, resides in the retreat of symbolic efficiency. And, in sociopolitical terms, this domain of appearance (that is, of symbolic fiction) is none other than that of politics, as distinguished from the social body subdivided into parts. There is appearance insofar as we are dealing with a part of no-part, insofar as a part not included in the whole of the social body (or included/excluded in a way it resists) protests against its position, against its allocated place, and symbolizes its position as that of a tort, of injustice, claiming that, against other parts, it stands for the universality of *égaliberté*. We are dealing here with appearance in contrast to the "reality" of the structured social body. The old conservative motto of keeping up appearances thus today obtains a new twist: it no longer stands for the wisdom according to which it is better not to disturb too much the rules of social etiquette, since social chaos might ensue. Today, rather, the effort to keep up appearances stands for the effort to save the properly political space against the onslaught of the multitude of particular identities of the postmodern, all-embracing social body.[9]

This is also how one has to read Hegel's famous dictum from *Phenomenology of Spirit* according to which "the Suprasensible is appearance qua appearance."[10] In a sentimental answer to a child who asks him how God's face looks, a priest answers that whenever the child encounters a human face radiating benevolence and goodness, no matter to whom this face belongs, he gets a glimpse of His face. The truth of this sentimental platitude is that the suprasensible (God's face) is discernible as a momentary, fleeting appearance, a kind of grimace, of an ordinary face. It is *this* dimension of appearance that transubstantiates a piece of reality into something which, for a brief moment, illuminates the suprasensible eternity that is missing in the logic of the simulacrum. In the simulacrum, which becomes indistinguishable from the real, everything is present, so that no other, transcendent dimension effectively appears in or through it. Here we are back at the Kantian problematic of the sublime. In Kant's famous reading of the enthusiasm evoked by the French Revolution in the enlightened public around Europe, the revolutionary events functioned as a sign through which the dimension of transphenomenal freedom, of a free society, appeared. Appearance is thus not simply the domain of phenomena but also those magic moments in which the other, noumenal, dimension momentarily appears in (or shines through) some

9. This crucial distinction between simulacrum (which overlaps with the Real) and appearance is easily discernible also in the domain of sexuality as the distinction between pornography and seduction: pornography "shows it all," "real sex," and for that very reason produces the mere simulacrum of sexuality, while the process of seduction consists entirely in the play of appearances, hints, and promises and thereby evokes the elusive domain of the suprasensible sublime Thing. For a more detailed analysis of the libidinal impact of pornography, see appendix 1 in Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (New York, 1997).

10. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford, 1977), p. 89.

empirical or contingent phenomenon. So, back to Hegel, "the Suprasensible is appearance qua appearance" does not simply mean that the suprasensible is not a positive entity *beyond* the phenomenon but rather points to the inherent power of negativity, which makes appearance "merely an appearance," that is, something that is not in itself fully actual but condemned to perish in the process of self-sublation. It also means that the suprasensible comes to exist only in the guise of an appearance of another dimension that interrupts the standard, normal order of phenomena.

Today, however, we are dealing with another form of the denegation of the political, postmodern postpolitics, which no longer merely represses the political, trying to contain it and to pacify the returns of the repressed, but much more effectively forecloses it, so that the postmodern forms of ethnic violence, with their irrational, excessive character, are no longer simple returns of the repressed but, rather, present the case of the foreclosed (from the Symbolic), which, as we know from Lacan, returns in the Real. In postpolitics, the conflict of global ideological visions embodied in different parties who compete for power is replaced by the collaboration of enlightened technocrats (economists and public opinion specialists, for example) and liberal multiculturalists; via the process of negotiation of interests a compromise is reached in the guise of a more or less universal consensus. The political (the space of litigation in which the excluded can protest the wrong or injustice done to them) foreclosed from the Symbolic then returns in the Real in the guise of new forms of racism. It is crucial to perceive how postmodern racism emerges as the ultimate consequence of the postpolitical suspension of the political, of the reduction of the state to a mere police agent servicing the (consensually established) needs of market forces and multiculturalist, tolerant humanitarianism. The foreigner whose status is never properly "regulated" is the *indivisible remainder* of the transformation of democratic political struggle into the postpolitical procedure of negotiation and multiculturalist policing. Instead of the *political subject* "working class" demanding its universal rights, we get, on the one hand, the multiplicity of particular social strata or groups, each with its problems (the dwindling need for manual workers, and so forth), and, on the other hand, the immigrant increasingly prevented from *politicizing* his predicament of exclusion.[11]

Here one should oppose *globalization* to *universalization: globalization* (not only in the sense of global capitalism, the establishment of a global world market, but also in the sense of the assertion of "humanity" as the global point of reference of human rights, legitimizing the violation of state sovereignty and policing activities—from trade restrictions to direct military interventions—in parts of the world where global human rights are violated) is precisely the name for the emerging postpolitical logic

11. See Rancière, *La Mésentente*, p. 162.

that progressively precludes the dimension of universality at work in po-
liticization proper. The paradox is that there is no *universal* proper with-
out the process of political litigation of the part of no-part, of an out-of-
joint entity presenting/manifesting itself as the stand-in for the universal.
The otherness excluded from the consensual domain of tolerant/rational
postpolitical negotiation and administration returns in the guise of the
inexplicable pure evil whose emblematic image is that of holocaust. What
defines postmodern postpolitics is thus the secret solidarity between its
Janus faces: on the one hand, the replacement of politics proper by depo-
liticized, so-called humanitarian operations (the humanitarian protec-
tion of human and civil rights and aid to Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda,
North Korea, and so forth); on the other hand, the violent emergence
of depoliticized pure evil in the guise of excessive ethnic or religious
fundamentalist violence. In short, what Rancière proposes here is a
new version of the old Hegelian motto "Evil resides in the gaze itself
which perceives the object as Evil":[12] the contemporary figure of evil too
strong to be accessible to political analysis (holocaust) appears as such
only to the gaze that constitutes it as such—that is, as depoliticized. Cru-
cial is their speculative identity, that is, the infinite judgement: Human-
itarian depoliticized compassion *is* the excess of evil over its political
forms.

The Excessive Violence

One should link this problematic to the notion proposed by Balibar
of excessive, nonfunctional cruelty as a feature of contemporary life:[13] a
cruelty whose figures range from fundamentalist racist and/or religious
slaughter to the supposedly senseless outbursts of violence performed by
adolescents and the homeless in our megalopolises, the violence one is
tempted to call *id-evil*—violence not grounded in utilitarian or ideological
reasons. That is to say, what strikes the eye in these cases is the "primitive"
level of the underlying libidinal economy—primitive not in the sense of
a regression to some archaic stratum but in the sense of the utmost *elemen-
tary* nature of the relationship between pleasure and *jouissance*, between
the circle of the pleasure principle that strives for balance, for the repro-
duction of its closed circuit, and the ex-timate foreign body. The libidinal
economy that sustains the infamous battle cry "Ausländer raus!" ("for-
eigners out!") can be exemplified by Lacan's schema of the relationship
between the *Ich* and *Lust,* where the *Unlust* is defined in the terms of
(non)assimilation as "what remains *unassimilable,* irreducible to the plea-

12. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* p. 401.
13. See Balibar, "Violence: Idéalite et cruauté," in *La Crainte des masses,* pp. 397–418.

sure principle."[14] The terms used by Freud and Lacan to describe the relationship of *Ich* and *jouissance* perfectly fit the metaphoric structure of the racist attitude towards foreigners: assimilation and resistance to assimilation, expulsion of a foreign body, disturbed balance. In order to locate this type of evil with regard to the usual types of evil, one is tempted to use as the classificatory principle the Freudian triad of ego, superego, and id. The most common kind of evil is *ego-evil:* behavior motivated by selfish calculation and greed, that is, by disregard for universal ethical principles. The evil attributed to the so-called fundamentalist fanatics, on the contrary, is *superego-evil:* evil accomplished in the name of fanatical devotion to some ideological ideal. In the example of a skinhead beating up foreigners, however, one can discern neither a clear selfish calculation nor a clear ideological identification. All the talk about foreigners stealing work from us, or about the threat they represent to our Western values, should not deceive us: on closer examination, it soon becomes clear that this talk provides a rather superficial secondary rationalization. The answer we ultimately obtain from the skinhead is that it makes him feel good to beat up foreigners, that their presence disturbs him. What we encounter here is id-evil, that is, the evil structured and motivated by the most elementary imbalance in the relationship between the *Ich* and *jouissance,* by the tension between pleasure and the foreign body of *jouissance* at the very heart of it. Id-evil thus stages the most elementary short-circuit in the relationship of the subject to the primordially missing object-cause of his desire. What bothers us in the Other (the Jew, the Japanese, the African, the Turk, and so forth) is that he appears to entertain a privileged relationship to the object. The Other either possesses the object-treasure, having snatched it away from us (which is why we don't have it), or poses a threat to our possession of the object.[15]

What one should propose here, again, is the Hegelian infinite judgement asserting the speculative identity of this supposedly useless and excessive outburst of violence, which displays nothing but a pure and naked (nonsublimated) hatred of Otherness, with the postpolitical multiculturalist universe of tolerance for difference in which nobody is excluded. Of course, the term *nonsublimated* is here used in its common meaning, which in this case stands for the exact opposite of its strict psychoanalytic meaning. In short, what takes place in the focusing of our hatred on some representative of the (officially tolerated) Other is the very mechanism of sublimation at its most elementary. The all-encompassing nature of the

14. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis,* trans. Alan Sheridan, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York, 1981), p. 241; see also p. 240.

15. For a closer examination of these three forms of evil, see chap. 3 of Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality* (New York, 1994), pp. 54–85. My argument here is drawn from material previously published in this work, pp. 70–71.

postpolitical concrete universality, which accounts for everybody at the level of symbolic inclusion, this multiculturalist vision and practice of unity in difference (all equal, all different), leaves open, as the only way to mark the difference, the protosublimating gesture of elevating a contingent Other (of race, sex, or religion, for example) into the absolute Otherness of the impossible Thing, the ultimate threat to our identity— this Thing which should be annihilated if we are to survive. Therein resides the properly Hegelian paradox: the final arrival of the truly rational concrete universality—the abolition of antagonisms, the mature universe of negotiated coexistence of different groups—coincides with its radical opposite, with thoroughly contingent outbursts of violence.

There are two further Hegelian aspects to this excessive violence. First, Hegel's fundamental rule is that objective excess (the direct reign of abstract universality that imposes its law mechanically, with utter disregard for the concerned subject caught in its web) is always supplemented by subjective excess (the irregular, arbitrary exercise of whims). An exemplary case of this interdependence between objective and subjective excess is provided by Balibar, who distinguishes two opposite, but complementary, modes of excessive violence: the ultra-objective (or structural) violence that is inherent to the social conditions of global capitalism (the automatic creation of excluded and dispensable individuals, from the homeless to the unemployed), and the ultrasubjective violence of newly emerging ethnic and/or religious (in short, racist) fundamentalisms.[16] The second aspect is that this supposedly excessive and groundless violence involves its own mode of knowledge, that of impotent cynical reflection. Back to our example of id-evil, the skinhead who beats up foreigners: when really pressed for the reasons for his violence, and if capable of minimal theoretical reflection, the skinhead will suddenly start to talk like social workers, sociologists, and social psychologists, citing diminished social mobility, rising insecurity, the disintegration of paternal authority, the lack of maternal love in his early childhood, and so forth. In short, he will provide the more or less precise psychosociological account of his acts so dear to enlightened liberals eager to understand the violent youth as the tragic victim of his social and familial conditions.[17] The standard enlightened formula of the efficiency of the critique of ideology from Plato onwards ("they are doing it because they do not know what they are doing," which asserts that knowledge is in itself liberating, as when the erring subject reflects upon what he is doing he will no longer do it) is here turned around: the violent skinhead knows very well what he is doing, but he is nonetheless doing it.[18] This cynically impotent

16. Balibar, *La Crainte des masses,* pp. 42, 43.

17. See Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters* (New York, 1996), p. 199.

18. For a more detailed account of this reflected cynical attitude, see chap. 3 of Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder,* pp. 189–236.

reflective knowledge is the obverse of senseless, excessive violence. We are dealing here with something akin to the well-known unpleasant scene from Terry Gilliam's *Brazil:* in a high-class restaurant, the waiter recommends to his customers the best choices from the daily menu ("Today, our tournedos is really special!"), yet what the customers get is a dazzling color photo of the meal on a stand above their plates, and on the plates themselves, a loathsome, excremental, pastelike lump. In the same way, the symbolically efficient knowledge embedded in the subject's effective social praxis disintegrates into, on the one hand, excessive, irrational violence with no ideologico-political foundation and, on the other hand, into impotent external reflection that leaves the subject's acts intact. So, in the guise of this cynically impotent, reflecting skinhead who, with an ironic smile, explains to the perplexed journalist the roots of his senselessly violent behavior, the enlightened, tolerant multiculturalist bent on understanding forms of excessive violence gets his own message in its inverted, true form. In short, as Lacan would have put it, at this point the communication between him and the object of his study, the intolerant skinhead, is perfectly successful.

Crucial here is the distinction between this excessive, irrational, disfunctional, cruel violence and the outbursts of obscene violence that serve as the implicit support of the standard ideological universal notion; say, when the rights of man are not really universal but, effectively, the right of white males with property, any attempt to disregard this implicit, underlying set of unwritten rules that effectively constrains the universality of rights is met by outbursts of violence. Nowhere is this contrast stronger than in the case of African Americans in the United States. The old parapolitical, democratic racism excluded blacks from effectively participating in the universal political life by way of silently enforcing their exclusion (through verbal and physical threats and so forth). The adequate answer to this standard exclusion from the universal was the great civil rights movement associated with Martin Luther King, Jr., suspending the implicit obscene supplement that enacted the actual exclusion of blacks from formal universal equality. Of course, it was easy for such a gesture to gain the support of a large majority of the white, liberal, upper-class establishment, which dismissed the opponents as dumb, lower-class Southern rednecks. Today, however, the very terrain of the struggle has changed. The postpolitical liberal establishment not only fully acknowledges the gap between a mere formal equality and its actualization or implementation, it not only recognizes the exclusionary logic of the false ideological universality, but it even actively fights this logic by applying to it a vast legal/psychological/sociological network of measures, from identifying the specific problems of each group and subgroup (not only homosexuals but African American lesbians, African American lesbian mothers, African American single unemployed lesbian mothers, and so on) to proposing a set of measures (affirmative action, for example) to

amend the wrong. However, what such a tolerant procedure prevents is the gesture of *politicization* proper: although the difficulties of being an African American single unemployed lesbian mother are adequately cataloged, including even the category's most specific features, the concerned subject nonetheless somehow feels that there is something wrong and frustrating in this very effort to render justice for her specific predicament. What she is deprived of is the possibility of the metaphoric elevation of her specific wrong into the stand-in for the universal wrong. The only way openly to articulate this universality—the fact that one, precisely, is *not* merely that specific individual exposed to a set of specific injustices—consists then in its apparent opposite, in the thoroughly irrational, excessive outburst of violence. The old Hegelian rule is here again confirmed: the only way for the universality to come into existence, to posit itself as such, is in the guise of its very opposite, of what cannot but appear as an excessive, irrational whim.

One can see now why the reference to Schmitt is crucial in detecting the deadlocks of postpolitical liberal tolerance. Schmittean ultrapolitics— the radicalization of politics into open warfare of us-against-them discernible in different fundamentalisms—*is the form in which the foreclosed political returns in the postpolitical universe of pluralist negotiation and consensual regulation.* For that reason, the way to counteract this reemerging ultrapolitics is not more tolerance, more compassion and multicultural understanding, but the *return of the political proper,* that is, the reassertion of the dimension of antagonism that, far from denying universality, is consubstantial with it. Therein resides the key component of the proper *leftist* stance, as opposed to the rightist assertion of particular identity: in the equation of *universalism* with the militant, *divisive* position of engagement in a struggle. True universalists are not those who preach global tolerance of differences and all-encompassing unity but those who engage in a passionate fight for the assertion of the truth that engages them. Theoretical, religious, and political examples abound here: from Saint Paul, whose unconditional Christian universalism (everyone can be redeemed, since, in the eyes of Christ, there are no Jews and Greeks, no men and women) made him into a proto-Leninist militant fighting different "deviations"; through Marx, whose notion of class struggle is the necessary obverse of the universalism of his theory, which aims at the "redemption" of the whole of humanity; and Freud; and including many great political figures. When de Gaulle, for example, almost alone in England in 1940, launched his call for resistance to German occupation, he was at the same time presuming to speak on behalf of the universality of France and, *for that very reason,* introducing a radical split, a fissure between those who followed him and those who preferred the collaborationist fleshpots of Egypt. To put it in Alain Badiou's terms, it is crucial here not to translate the terms of this struggle, set in motion by the violent and contingent assertion of the new universal truth, into the terms of the order of positive

Being with its groups and subgroups, conceiving of it as the struggle be-
tween two social entities defined by a series of positive characteristics.[19]
Therein resided the "mistake" of Stalinism, which reduced class struggle
to a struggle between classes defined as social groups with a set of positive
features (their place in the mode of production, and so forth). From a
truly radical Marxist perspective, although there is a link between the
working class as a social group and the proletariat as the position of the
militant fighting for universal Truth, this link is not a determining causal
connection, and the two levels are to be strictly distinguished. To be pro-
letarian involves assuming a certain *subjective stance* (of class struggle des-
tined to achieve redemption through revolution) that, in principle, can
occur to any individual; to put it in religious terms, irrespective of his
(good) works, any individual can be touched by grace and interpellated
as a proletarian subject. The limit that separates the two opposed sides in
the class struggle is thus not objective, not the limit separating two posi-
tive social groups, but ultimately *radically subjective;* it involves the position
individuals assume towards the Event of universal Truth. Again, the cru-
cial point here is that subjectivity and universalism are not only not exclu-
sive but are, rather, two sides of the same coin. It is precisely because
class struggle interpellates individuals to adopt the subjective stance of a
proletarian that its appeal is universal, aiming at everyone with no excep-
tions. The division it mobilizes is not the division between two well-
defined social groups but the division, which runs "diagonally" to the
social division in the Order of Being, between those who recognize them-
selves in the call of the Truth-Event, becoming its followers, and those
who deny or ignore it. In Hegelese, *the existence of the true Universal*
(as opposed to the false concrete universality of the all-encompassing
global Order of Being) *is that of an endless and incessantly divisive struggle;*
it is ultimately the division between the two notions (and material
practices) of universality, that which advocates the positivity of the exist-
ing global Order of Being as the ultimate horizon of knowledge and
action, and that which accepts the efficiency of the dimension of the
Truth-Event irreducible to (and unaccountable in the terms of) the Order
of Being.

From the Sublime to the Ridiculous

How do these insights enable us to shed new light on the prospect of
today's leftist (re)politicization of our common predicament? Let us re-
turn to the disintegration of Eastern European socialism. The passage
from actually existing socialism to actually existing capitalism in Eastern
Europe brought about a series of comic reversals, in which sublime demo-

19. See Alain Badiou, *L'Être et l'événement* (Paris, 1988).

cratic enthusiasm was transformed into the ridiculous. The dignified East German crowds gathering around Protestant churches and heroically defying Stasi terror all of a sudden turned into vulgar consumers of bananas and cheap pornography; the civilized Czechs mobilized by the appeal of Václav Havel and other cultural icons all of a sudden turned into cheap swindlers of Western tourists. The disappointment was mutual. The West, which began by idolizing the Eastern dissident movement as the reinvention of its own tired democracy, disappointedly dismisses the present postsocialist regimes as a mixture of the corrupted ex-communist oligarchy and/or ethnic and religious fundamentalists (even the dwindling group of liberals is mistrusted as not being politically correct enough: where is their feminist awareness? is but one of many critiques levelled at them). The East, which began by idolizing the West as the example of affluent democracy, finds itself in a whirlpool of ruthless commercialization and economic colonization. Perhaps, however, this double disappointment, this double failed encounter between ex-communist dissidents and Western liberal democrats is crucial for the identity of Europe; perhaps what transpires in the gap that separates the two perspectives is a glimpse of a Europe worth fighting for.

The hero of Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon,* the private detective Sam Spade, tells the story of being hired to find a man who had suddenly left his settled job and family and vanished. Spade is unable to track him down, but a few years later, he encounters the man in another city. Under an assumed name, the man leads a life remarkably similar to the one he fled from (a regular boring job, a new wife and children); however, in spite of this similarity, the man is convinced that beginning again was not in vain, that it was well worth the trouble to cut his ties and start a new life. Perhaps the same goes for the passage from actually existing socialism to actually existing capitalism in ex-communist Eastern European countries. In spite of the betrayed enthusiastic expectations, something *did* take place in between, in the passage itself, and it is in this event in between, this vanishing mediator, in this moment of democratic enthusiasm, that we should locate the crucial dimension obfuscated by later renormalization.

It is clear that the protesting crowds in East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia wanted something else, a utopian object of impossible fullness designated by a multiplicity of names (*solidarity, human rights,* and so forth), *not* what they effectively got. Two reactions towards this gap between expectations and reality are possible; the best way to capture them is by reference to the well-known opposition between *fool* and *knave.* The fool is a simpleton, a court jester who is allowed to tell the truth precisely because the performative power (the sociopolitical efficiency) of his speech is suspended; the knave is the cynic who openly states the truth, a crook who tries to sell as honesty the open admission of his crookedness, a scoundrel who admits the need for illegitimate repression in

order to maintain social stability. This opposition has a clear political con-
notation: today's right-wing intellectual is a knave, a conformist who re-
fers to the mere existence of the given order as an argument for it and
mocks the left for harboring utopian plans that will necessarily lead to
totalitarian or anarchic catastrophe; while the left-wing intellectual is a
fool, a court jester who publicly displays the lie of the existing order but
in a way that undercuts the sociopolitical efficiency of his speech. After
the fall of socialism, the knave is a neoconservative advocate of the free
market who cruelly rejects all forms of social solidarity as counterproduc-
tive sentimentalism, while the fool is a multiculturalist, "radical" social
critic who, by means of ludic procedures designed to subvert the existing
order, actually serves as its supplement. With regard to Eastern Europe,
a knave dismisses the "third way" project of the Neues Forum in the for-
mer East Germany as a hopelessly outdated utopian vision and exhorts
us to accept the cruel market reality, while a fool insists that the collapse
of socialism effectively opened up a third way, a possibility left unex-
ploited by the Western recolonization of the East.

    This cruel reversal of the sublime into the ridiculous was, of course,
grounded in the fact that a double misunderstanding was at work in the
public (self-) perception of the social protest movements in the last years
of Eastern European socialism (from Solidarity to Neues Forum). On the
one hand, there were attempts by the ruling *nomenklatura* to reinscribe
these events in their police/political framework, by way of distinguishing
between "honest critics" with whom one should talk, but in a calm, ratio-
nal, depoliticized atmosphere, and a bunch of extremist provocateurs
who served foreign interests. (This logic was brought to its absurd ex-
treme in the former Yugoslavia, in which the very notion of a workers'
strike was incomprehensible since, according to the dominant ideological
paradigm, workers already ruled through self-management of their com-
panies—against whom, then, could they strike?) The battle was thus not
only for higher wages and better conditions but also, and above all, for
the workers to be acknowledged as legitimate partners in negotiating
with the representative of the regime. The moment power was forced to
accept this, the battle was, in a way, already won. The interesting point
here is how, in this struggle within socialism in decay, the very term *politi-
cal* functioned in an inverted way: it was the Communist Party (standing
for the police logic) which "politicized" the situation (by speaking of
counterrevolutionary tendencies, and so forth), while the opposition
movement insisted on its fundamentally apolitical, civic-ethical character.
They merely stood for the so-called simple values of dignity and freedom,
for example. No wonder their main signifier was the apolitical notion
of solidarity.

    When these movements exploded into a broad mass phenomenon,
their demands for freedom and democracy (and solidarity and so on)
were also misperceived by Western commentators. They saw in them the

confirmation that the people of the East wanted what people in the West already had; that is, they automatically translated these demands into the Western liberal-democratic notion of freedom (the multiparty representational political game *cum* global market economy). Emblematic to the point of caricature was the figure of Dan Rather, the American news reporter, on Tiananmen Square in 1989, standing in front of the copy of the Statue of Liberty and claiming that this statue said it all about what the protesting students demanded (in short, if you scratch the skin of a Chinese person, underneath you find an American). What this statue effectively stood for was a utopian longing having nothing to do with the actual United States (incidentally, it was the same with many immigrants to America for whom the view of the statue stood for a utopian longing soon crushed down). The perception of the American media thus offered another example of the reinscription of the explosion of Balibar's *égaliberté*, the unconditional demand for freedom and equality that explodes any positive order, within the confines of a given order.

For a Leftist Appropriation of the European Legacy

Are we then condemned to the debilitating alternative of choosing between a knave or a fool, or is there a *tertium datur*? Perhaps the contours of this *tertium datur* can be discerned by reference to the fundamental European legacy. As we have already seen, politics proper designates the moment at which a particular demand is not simply part of the negotiation of interests but aims at something more, that is, starts to function as the metaphoric condensation of the global restructuring of the entire social space. The contrast is clear between this subjectivization of a part of the social body that rejects its subordinated place in the social-police edifice and demands to be heard at the level of *égaliberté*, and today's proliferation of postmodern identity politics, whose goal is the exact opposite, that is, precisely the assertion of one's particular identity, of one's proper place within the social structure. The postmodern identity politics of particular (ethnic, sexual, and so forth) lifestyles fits perfectly the depoliticized notion of society in which every particular group is accounted for and has its specific status (of victimhood) acknowledged through affirmative action or other measures destined to guarantee social justice. For this kind of justice to be rendered to victimized minorities, an intricate police apparatus is required (for identifying the group in question; for punishing the offenders against its rights; for determining how legally to define sexual harassment or racial injury, and so forth; and for providing for the preferential treatment that is intended to outweigh the wrong this group suffered). Postmodern identity politics involves the logic of *ressentiment*, of proclaiming oneself a victim and expecting the dominant

social Other to pay for the damage, while *égaliberté* breaks out of the vicious cycle of *ressentiment*. What is usually praised as postmodern politics (the pursuit of particular issues whose resolution is to be negotiated within the "rational" global order, allocating to a particular component its proper place) is thus effectively the end of politics proper.

Two interconnected traps apropos of the fashionable topic of the end of ideology brought about by the present process of globalization are to be avoided at any cost: first, the commonplace according to which today's main antagonism is between global liberal capitalism and different forms of ethnic/religious fundamentalism; second, the hasty identification of globalization (the contemporary transnational functioning of capital) with universalization. As we have already emphasized, the true opposition today is rather between globalization (the emerging global market new world order) and universalism (the properly political domain of universalizing one's particular fate as representative of global injustice). This difference between globalization and universalism becomes more and more palpable today, when capital, in the name of penetrating new markets, quickly renounces requests for democracy in order not to lose access to new trade partners. This shameful retreat is then, of course, legitimized as respect for cultural difference, as the right of the (ethnic/religious/cultural) Other to choose the way of life that suits it best—as long as it does not disturb the free circulation of capital.

This opposition between universalism and globalization is best exemplified by two countries: France and the United States. French republican ideology is the epitome of modernist universalism: of democracy based on a universal notion of citizenship. In clear contrast to it, the United States is a global society, a society in which the global market and legal system serve as the container (rather than the proverbial melting pot) for the endless proliferation of particular group identities. The paradox is that the proper roles seem to be reversed: France, in its republican universalism, is more and more perceived as a *particular* phenomenon threatened by the process of globalization, while the United States, with its multitude of groups demanding recognition of their particular, specific identities, more and more emerges as the universal model. So, perhaps, the parallel between our time and the Roman empire, with the United States rather than Rome as the one global superpower, is not without foundation, especially if one brings into the picture the emergence of Christianity. The first centuries of our era saw the opposition of the *global* "multicultural" Roman empire and Christianity, which posed such a threat to the empire precisely on account of its *universal* appeal. Furthermore, Christianity opposed itself to two types of discourses, the Greek discourse of philosophical sophistry and the Jewish discourse of obscurantist prophetism, like today's twin brothers of deconstructionist sophistry and New Age obscurantism. Is, then, our task today not exactly

homologous to that of Christianity: to undermine the global empire of capital, not by asserting particular identities, but through the assertion of a new universality?[20]

The reemerging populist fundamentalism is the inherent product of globalization and, as such, the living proof of the failure of the postmodern abolition of politics, in which the basic economic logic is accepted as the depoliticized Real (a neutral expert knowledge that defines the parameters within which the different strata of population and political subjects are expected to reach a compromise and formulate their common goals). Within this space, the political returns in two guises: on the one hand, rightist populism; on the other hand, the "wild" demands for social justice, for the security of employment, and so forth, which are then denounced by supposedly neutral economic specialists as irrational, out of touch with the new reality of the demise of the welfare state, as the remainders of old ideological battles. The (potential) partner is here neutralized, not acknowledged as a partner at all; the position from which he or she speaks is disqualified in advance. Multiculturalist openness versus a new fundamentalism is thus a false dilemma: they are the two faces of today's postpolitical universe.

The late-capitalist solution is best epitomized by two city-states, Hong Kong and Singapore. In Singapore, we find the paradoxical combination of capitalist economic logic with corporate communitarian ethics aimed at precluding any politicization of social life. Hong Kong under Chinese rule seems to move towards the same solution, albeit in a more Americanized, multiculturalist, and pluralist spirit. It is deeply significant that, in the last years of his life, the late Deng Xiaobing himself, the so-called father of Chinese reforms, expressed his admiration for Singapore as the model to be followed in China. The motto of "wise" Asian rulers like Singapore's Lee Kwan Yew—the combination of the full inclusion of their economies into global capitalism with the traditional Asian values of discipline, respect for tradition, and so forth—points precisely towards *globalization without universalism,* that is, with the political dimension suspended. In a different way, the model towards which the United States seems to be moving—the permissive coexistence of a multitude of ways of life within the global capitalist framework—approaches in another way the same result of depoliticization. This rising globalization without universalism demonstrates that the opposition of globalization to particular cultural identity embodied in a specific way of life is deeply misleading. What is effectively threatened by globalization is not the *cosa nostra* (our private secret way of life from which others are excluded, which others want to steal from us) but its exact opposite: universality itself, in its eminently political dimension. One of today's common wisdoms is that we

20. See Badiou, "Saint Paul, ou la naissance de l'universalisme" (unpublished manuscript, Paris, 1996).

are entering a new medieval society in the guise of the new world order. The grain of truth in this comparison is that, like medieval times, the new world order is global, but not universal, since it strives for a new global *order* with each part in its allocated place.

A typical advocate of liberalism today throws together workers' protests against the loss of their rights and right-wing insistence on fidelity to the Western cultural heritage; he perceives both as pitiful remainders of the so-called age of ideology that have nothing to do with today's post-ideological universe. However, the two resistances to globalization follow totally incompatible logics: the Right insists on a *particular* communal identity (based on ethnos or habitat) threatened by the onslaught of globalization, while for the Left, the threatened dimension is that of politicization, of articulating "impossible" *universal* demands (impossible from within the existing space of the world order). From the sublime heights of Jürgen Habermas's theory to vulgar market ideologists, we are bombarded by different versions of depoliticization: no longer struggle but dialogic negotiation, regulated competition, and so on. No wonder that border control emerges as one of the main points of today's international negotiations—a clear indication that we are dealing with the reduction of politics to social *Polizei*. Against this end-of-ideology politics, one should insist on the potential of democratic politicization as the true European legacy from ancient Greece onwards. *Will we be able to invent a new mode of repoliticization questioning the undisputed reign of global capital?* Only such a repoliticization of our predicament can break the vicious cycle of liberal globalization destined to engender the most regressive forms of fundamentalist hatred.