### Roll of the Ballot

#### Our enframing is uniquely key because the role of the cultural analyst is not to provide new meanings, but to expose the pathological nature of the status quo’s investments—this is a necessary prerequisite for any type of public deliberation

Mootz**,** Visiting Professor of Law at Pennsylvania State University, 2000 [Francis J., II, “Psychotherapeutic Practice as a Model for Postmodern Legal Theory,” Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities, Summer, 12 Yale J.L. & Human. 299]

Habermas does not pretend that his theoretical reconstruction of the idealizations subtending communicative reason can spell out in advance what the content of rational communication will be. Nevertheless, he does make the strong claim that rationality is defined by universal stages of development, closely tracking Lawrence Kohlberg's claim that there is an invariant pattern in the development of the capacity for moral judgment. 70 Kohlberg underwrites Habermas's insistence that we must distinguish the claim that there is a universal capacity for rational moral judgment from the admission that moral philosophy "does not have privileged [\*323] access to particular moral truths." 71 In light of this distinction, **critical theory cannot dictate the elements of the "good life**" that pertain within a particular social setting but can only describe the conditions under which the social actors may together agree on these elements in a rational manner. 72 In this respect, Habermas follows Freud's insight that **a theoretical reconstruction points the way not to resolutions of particular problems facing the patient, but rather to an understanding of the conditions under which an individual obtains the autonomy to handle life's demands in a rational manner. The** **theoretically-guided role of the analyst (critical theorist) is not to tell the patient (society) how to live her life (organize itself), but instead to work from universal idealizations to identify and eradicate distortions that prevent the patient (society) from exercising her autonomy to make rational, rather than pathological, life choices.** Although **Habermas** does not expressly invoke his psychoanalytic model of critical theory in support of his philosophy of communicative reason, he **returns to the model to explain** the crucial difference between the simple manipulation of dialogue by one communication partner and **the unconscious, mutual deception that occurs in systematically distorted communication.** 73 Similarly, Habermas reiterates his critique of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics for its inability to underwrite a critical perspective on received traditions, arguing that a hermeneutical exegesis cannot be rational under conditions of systematically distorted communication. 74 It seems clear that the theory of communicative [\*324] rationality plays the role in Habermas's critical theory that Freud's theories of ego development and neuroses played in his psychoanalytic practice. The theory of communicative rationality invests the seemingly artful and individual practice of social critique with the authority of theoretical knowledge, even if Habermas's proceduralist approach remains quite subdued when compared with Freud's claims. Admittedly, Habermas's revised approach implicitly concedes much to the force of Gadamer's critique. Even after his sharp criticism of Freud's theoretical overreaching, Habermas's psychoanalytic model accorded a unique role to critical theory in unmasking the distorting effects of social organization. In contrast, Habermas's theory of communicative action looks within the practical experience of dialogue to locate the quasi-transcendental, regulative ideal that grounds the critical enterprise. The critical impulse becomes one of clarification and extension in Habermas's recent writings, since the critical standards upon which he draws are always already instantiated in intersubjective practices and, in fact, have served as the foundation of the modernist expansion of rationality. 75 Critical theory works from within rationality, one might say, to identify social deformations against the internal standards of rationality itself. 76 Despite Habermas's reversion to the priority of practice, Paul Fairfield has correctly argued that Habermas remains enmeshed in precisely the problems that he diagnosed in Freud's metapsychology. By adopting Kohlberg's developmental stages of moral reasoning, Habermas participates in the "myth of the expert, the social critic "in the know' whose standpoint within the "conversation that we are' is to be awarded a position of privilege." 77 Fairfield persuasively [\*325] demonstrates that Habermas's initial attention to the dialogic encounter of psychoanalytic practice remains overshadowed by his desire to establish a properly theoretical role for the social analyst, "whose self-appointed task is not to persuade but to "diagnose,' not to submit interpretations to one's interlocutors but to "enlighten' and "explain,' not to listen to the claims of others but to "score' their judgments" on a developmental scale. 78 The critic does not seek mutual understanding, but instead first discovers universal criteria in the very use of language. The critic lays claim to expert knowledge about the existence of systematically distorted communication that must be eradicated before ordinary conversation among citizens may proceed in a rationally justified manner. Habermas recently has extended the discourse principle of his moral philosophy to the pragmatic arena of law and politics, thereby providing a striking contextual example of his approach to critical theory that clearly reveals the continuing tensions in his psychoanalytic model. Habermas argues that the conflict between the empirical features of legal institutions and the normative requirement that lawmaking processes be legitimate imposes a heavy burden on legal systems. He regards the historical development of the modern constitutional state as a series of attempts to bear this burden successfully. 79 Criticizing a wide range of philosophers who have suppressed either the factual or normative aspects of legality, Habermas insists that the task of political theory is to synthesize the sociology of legal power and the philosophy of legal legitimacy. By grounding legal rationality in the universal discourse principle that is presupposed by communicative action, Habermas argues that he is uncovering universal critical standards, albeit standards that regulate only the procedures of employing social reason. Unlike the classical form of practical reason, communicative reason is not an immediate source of prescriptions. It has a normative content only insofar as the communicatively acting individuals must commit themselves to pragmatic presuppositions of a counterfactual sort. That is, they must undertake certain idealizations... [and] are thus subject to the "must" of a weak transcendental necessity, but this does not mean they already encounter the prescriptive "must" of a rule of action... ... Communicative reason thus makes an orientation to validity [\*326] claims possible, but it does not itself supply any substantive orientation for managing practical tasks - it is neither informative nor immediately practical. ... [Nevertheless] the concept of communicative reason... offers a guide for reconstructing the network of discourses that, aimed at forming opinions and preparing decisions, provides the matrix from which democratic authority emerges. [This reconstruction would provide] a critical standard, against which actual practices - the opaque and perplexing reality of the constitutional state - could be evaluated. 80 Habermas's conception of critique clearly accords with the psychoanalytic model that he developed thirty years earlier. He begins with theoretical insights into the universal characteristics of reason and works toward concrete claims about the shape of reason in modern constitutional democracies as a standard for judging current practices. Yet he does not presume that his theory can deliver the correct answers to specific political questions. He is content to leave the substance of social policy-making to democratic resolution, but only after the procedural requirements of rationality that the philosopher identifies have been institutionally realized. 81 The irony in Habermas's approach is clear. The philosopher delivers theoretical knowledge about the general features of the democratic constitutional state without need for conferences with his fellow citizens. Recognizing the tension between facts and norms in modern society is a matter of historical reconstruction and the elucidation of the principles of communicative rationality. The philosopher's power is limited, however, to a rather thin conception of rationality, with the "good life" to be defined and pursued only in the actual coordination of life plans by the members of society. Nevertheless, these actual communicative exchanges are adjudged rational only by virtue of a philosophical inquiry into procedural prerequisites by the expert critic who stands outside these exchanges in his role as critic. While far more subtle and less hubristic than Freud's metapsychology, Habermas's philosophy of communicative rationality plays the same role as a regulative theoretical truth. In his [\*327] recent work, then, Habermas has attempted to make good on his earlier intuition that the "structural model which Freud introduced as the categorical framework of metapsychology is... reducible to a theory of deviations in communicative competence." 82 I have argued that Habermas's most recent work continues to reflect his thesis that psychoanalytic critique is an appropriate model of critical social theory. Far from embracing a crude conception of psychoanalytic theory, Habermas's criticism of Freud's self-misunderstanding is persuasive and devastating. Nevertheless, he connects the legitimacy of critical theory to a strong, even if thin, conception of the power of theory. The social theorist is never engaged in conversation with others in his role as social theorist, but rather is engaged in a theoretical project of reconstruction. Only after clearing the ground for rational discourse does the philosopher resume his place in social dialogue with others. **Like a good psychoanalyst, the social critic cannot take seriously (at face value) the communicative exchanges within society until he has assured himself that the theoretically-ascertained prerequisites of rational communication are satisfied.**

### Alt bad-- Social Movement

#### Buddhism claims to be redemptive by transforming us and allowing us to reach a state of inner peace. This desperate critique of ancient traditions renders irrelevant the challenges to reality. The indifference generated by Buddhism leads to violent eclipse of the entire world.

Slavoj Zizek, senior researcher for the institute of advanced studies in humanities essen, germany, “Revenge of Global Finance,” In These Times, 5-21, 2005, pg. http://www.inthesetimes.com/site/main/article/2122/

What this means is that the Buddhist all-encompassing Compassion has to be opposed to the Christian intolerant, violent Love. The Buddhist stance is ultimately that of indifference, of quenching all passions that strive to establish differences, while the Christian love is a violent passion to introduce a difference, a gap in the order of being, to privilege and elevate some object above others. Love is violence not (only) in the vulgar sense of the Balkan proverb, "If he doesn't beat me, he doesn't love me!" The choice of love itself is already violent, as it tears an object out of its context and elevates it to the Thing. In Montenegrin folklore, the origin of Evil is a beautiful woman: She makes men lose their balance, she literally destabilizes the universe, coloring all things with a tone of partiality. In March, the Vatican strongly condemned Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* as a book that spreads false teachings (that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and that they had descendants, that the true identity of the Grail is Mary's vagina). The Vatican especially rued that the book is so popular among the younger generation searching for spiritual guidance. The form of the Vatican's intervention, which barely concealed a longing for the good old days when it could simply burn books, was obviously absurd. (Indeed, one almost suspects a conspiracy between the Vatican and the book's publisher to give a fresh boost to its sales.) Nevertheless, the content of the Vatican's message was basically correct. *The Da Vinci Code* effectively re-inscribes Christianity into the New Age's paradigm of seeking balance between masculine and feminine principles. And--back to the *Revenge of the Sith*--the price for the film's sticking to these same New Age motifs is not only its ideological confusion, but, simultaneously, its inferior narrative quality. These motifs are why Anakin's transformation into Darth Vader--the series' pivotal moment--lacks the proper tragic grandeur. Instead of focusing on Anakin's hubris as an overwhelming desire to intervene, to do Good, to go to the end for those he loves and thus fall to the Dark Side, Anakin is simply shown as an indecisive warrior who is gradually sliding into Evil by giving way to the temptation of Power, by falling under the spell of the evil Emperor. In other words, Lucas lacked the nerve to really apply his parallel between the shift of the Republic to Empire and of Anakin to Darth Vader. Anakin should have become a monster out his very excessive attachment with seeing Evil everywhere and fighting it. Where, then, does this leave us? The ultimate postmodern irony is today's strange exchange between the West and the East. At the very moment when, at the level of "economic infrastructure," Western technology and capitalism are triumphing worldwide, at the level of "ideological superstructure," the Judeo-Christian legacy is threatened in the West itself by the onslaught of New Age "Asiatic" thought. Such Eastern wisdom, from "Western Buddhism" to Taoism, is establishing itself as the hegemonic ideology of global capitalism. But while Western Buddhism presents itself as the remedy against the stress of capitalism's dynamics--by allowing us to uncouple and retain some inner peace--it actually functions as the perfect ideological supplement. Consider the phenomenon of "future shock"--the popular term for how people today can no longer psychologically cope with the dazzling rhythm of technological development and the accompanying social change. Before one can become accustomed to the newest invention, another arrives to take its place, so that increasingly one lacks the most elementary "cognitive mapping." Eastern thought offers a way out that is far superior to the desperate attempt to escape into old traditions. The way to cope with this dizzying change, such wisdom suggests, is to renounce any attempts to retain control over what goes on, rejecting such efforts as expressions of the modern logic of domination. Instead, one should "let oneself go," drift along, while retaining an inner distance and indifference toward the mad dance of the accelerated process. Such distance is based on the insight that all of the upheaval is ultimately just a non-substantial proliferation of semblances that do not really concern the innermost kernel of our being. Here, one is almost tempted to resuscitate the old, infamous Marxist cliché of religion as "the opium of the people," as the imaginary supplement of real-life misery. The "Western Buddhist" meditative stance is arguably the most efficient way for us to fully participate in the capitalist economy while retaining the appearance of sanity. If Max Weber were alive today, he would definitely write a second, supplementary volume to his *Protestant Ethic*, titled *The Taoist Ethic and the Spirit of Global Capitalism*. Therefore, the true companion piece to *Star Wars III* is Alexander Oey's 2003 documentary, *Sandcastles: Buddhism and Global Finance*. A wonderfully ambiguous indication of our present ideological predicament, Sandcastles combines the commentaries of economist Arnoud Boot, sociologist Saskia Sassen and the Tibetan Buddhist teacher Dzongzar Khyentse Rinpoche. Sassen and Boot discuss the gigantic scope and power, as well as social and economic effects, of global finance. Capital markets, now valued at $83 trillion, exist within a system based purely on self-interest, in which herd behavior, often based on rumors, can inflate or destroy the value of companies--or whole economies--in a matter of hours. Khyentse Rinpoche counters them with ruminations about the nature of human perception, illusion and enlightenment. He tries to throw a new light on the mad dance of billion-dollar speculations with his philosophico-ethical statement, "Release your attachment to something that is not there in reality, but is a perception." Echoing the Buddhist notion that there is no self, only a stream of continuous perceptions, Sassen comments about global capital: "It's not that there are $83 trillion. It is essentially a continuous set of movements. It disappears and it reappears." But how are we to read this parallel between the Buddhist ontology and the structure of virtual capitalism's universe? The documentary tends toward the humanist reading: Seen through a Buddhist lens, the exuberance of global financial wealth is illusory, divorced from the objective reality--the very human suffering caused by deals made on trading floors and in boardrooms invisible to most of us. However, if one accepts the premise that the value of material wealth, and one's experience of reality, is subjective, and that desire plays a decisive role in both daily life and neoliberal economics, isn't it also possible to draw the exact opposite conclusion? Perhaps our traditional viewpoint of the world was based on naive notions of a substantial, external reality composed of fixed objects, while the hitherto unknown dynamic of "virtual capitalism" confronts us with the illusory nature of reality. What better proof of the non-substantial nature of reality than a gigantic fortune that can dissolve into nothing in a couple of hours due to a sudden false rumor? Consequently, why complain that financial speculations with futures markets are "divorced from objective reality," when the basic premise of Buddhist ontology is that there is no "objective reality"? The only "critical" lesson to be drawn from Buddhism's perspective on virtual capitalism is that one should be aware that we are dealing with a mere theater of shadows, with no substantial existence. Thus we need not fully engage ourselves in the capitalist game, but play it with an inner distance. Virtual capitalism could thus act as a first step toward "liberation." It confronts us with the fact that the cause of our suffering is not objective reality--there is no such thing--but rather our Desire, our craving for material things. All one has to do then, after ridding oneself of the false notion of a substantial reality, is simply renounce desire itself and adopt an attitude of inner peace and distance. No wonder Buddhism can function as the perfect ideological supplement to virtual capitalism: It allows us to participate in it with an inner distance, keeping our fingers crossed, and our hands clean, as it were. It is against such a temptation that we should remain faithful to the Christian legacy of separation, of elevating some principles above others.

### Alt bad-- Violence

#### Ultimately, the Buddhist understanding of life as empty portrays the world as a valueless endless place, which cannot ascribe a distinct value that makes life worth living and assisted in the development of war machines.

Erik Davis, “Cross Purposes: A Review of Slavoj Zizek’s *The Puppet and the Dwarf,*” Bookforum, 2003, http://www.techgnosis.com/zizek.html

In secular Europe, a dalliance with Christian ideas can provide a much-needed shock from beyond; for inhabitants of the United States, where rightwing Bible-thumpers directly drive American policy, Zizek's praise of Christianity's "violent love" may seem, at the very least, myopic. Rather than engage the horrors unleashed by the intolerance and absolutism of so much Christianity, Zizek saves his furor for Buddhism, whose popular Western form he characterizes as "the "paradigmatic ideology of late capitalism." The idea here is that Asiatic religion has gone pop because the interior cultivation of detachment allows people to go with the flow without going nuts--even if the flow is a horror show. For evidence, Zizek drags out the Zen establishment's widespread support of the Japanese war machine in the 1930s and ' 40s==a shameful history that has confounded Western Buddhists the way that De Man's or Heidegger's Nazi ties have confounded many intellectuals. For Zizek, though, this episode becomes simple proof of the "perverse desubjectification" and ethical confusion inherent in Buddhist experience. Siding with G.K. Chesterton against Buddhism (as well as Theosophy), Zizek aligns himself with some longstanding, orthodox complaints about Asian religious thought and its Western mutations. But Buddhism in the West is not the same thing it was in Madame Blavatsky's day, and Zizek needs to do some homework. He seems to think, for example, that "Bodhisattva" is a particular being and not a general category, like "saint." More regrettable is his evident ignorance of philosophical heavyweights like Dogen, the Heideggerean founder of Soto Zen, or Nagarjuna, the key Mahayana thinker. At one point he Zizek complains that, in contrast to Hegel's "tarrying with the negative," Buddhism's passage through emptiness cannot "return to a phenomenal reality which is Ôbeyond nothing.'" But this is precisely the operation achieved in Prasangika Madhyamika, the philosophical school to which the Dalai Lama--a favorite target of Zizek's--belongs. Zizek seems horrified by the thought that religious experience could have anything to do with bliss. As Zizek sees it, the problem with the pop gospel of happiness preached by the Dalai Lama is that an inoffensive ethic of happiness--especially in its guise of "protecting the Other from pain"--opens up the "path to a perfect totalitarian society." Zizek's hostility is rooted in his belief that that the real is traumatic, and that ideologies of wholeness and harmony attempt to cover this up, quenching the revolutionary potential that lies in the anxious split that defines the modern subject. "Freedom is not a blissfully neutral state of harmony and balance, but the very violent act which disturbs this balance." Instead of seeking wholeness, Zizek believes we must take responsibility for our tragic desire, to take a stand on the field of differences, to wrestle with the angel rather than merge with it or medicate ourselves out of the struggle. As his fascinating discussion of Chesterton suggests, Zizek feels such fidelity to the rupture of modernity that, in our post-everything days, he sometimes finds himself on the "conservative" side of the fence--a paradox he no doubt enjoys. But what Zizek really wants is to keep open the possibility of revolutionary subjectivity. In The Puppet and the Dwarf, Zizek asks if maybe we are only "really alive" when we engage ourselves with excessive intensity. If so, he suggests, then a Palestinian suicide bomber is more alive than a New York yuppie jogging to keep fit. "What makes like worth living' is the very excess of life: the awareness that there is something for which we are ready to risk our life (we may call this excess "freedom, "honor," "dignity," "autonomy," etc.)." Following 9/11, we have come to instantly recoil from such intensities, but Zizek's provocative claims remind us of the well-managed secular dystopia that lies on the far end of that recoil. In contrast, Zizek calls for a kind of Lacanian liberation theology wherein subjectivity bursts through objective history into messianic time. "Authentic revolution," he says, "always occurs in an absolute Present, in the unconditional urgency of a Now."

### Alt isn’t ethical

#### Their position is by nature meant to ensure that they don’t have to actively engage in the other’s reality. Their performance amounts to a telethon for the other designed to throw scraps of wealth across the great class divide. The truly ethical act is to dismantle the divide itself.

Slavoj Zizek, Professor of Sociology at the Institute for Sociology, Ljubljana University, 2002, Revolution at the Gates, p. 208

So, in the conditions of late capitalism, our affective life is irrevocably split: on the one hand there is the sphere of “privacy”, of intimate islands of emotional sincerity and intense engagements which, precisely, serve as obstacles which blind us to wider forms of suffering; on the other there is the (metaphorical and literal) screen through which we perceive this wider suffering, bombarded daily with TV reports on ethnic cleansing, rapes, tortures, natural catastrophes, with which we deeply sympathize and which sometimes move us to engage in humanitarian activities. Even when this engagement is quasi-”personalized” (like the photo and letter from a child in Africa whom we support through regular financial contributions), ulti­mately, the payment here retains its fundamental subjective function isolated by psychoanalysis: we give money in order to keep the suffering others at a proper distance which allows us to indulge in emotional sympathy without endangering our safe isolation from their reality. This split of the victims is the truth of the discourse of victimization: me (the harassed one) versus others (in the Third World or the homeless in our cities) with whom I sympathize at a distance. In contrast to this ideologico-emotional baggage, the authentic work of Love does not lie in helping the other by, as it were, throwing him scraps of our wealth across a safe barrier: it is, rather, the work of dismantling this barrier, of directly reaching out to the foreclosed suffering Other.