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Iran's Utopian Melancholy

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"How, then, are we to revolutionize an order whose very principle is constant self-revolutionizing?" (Žižek 2008: 205)

This question captures everything at stake in Slavoj Žižek's political philosophy. As a Marxist, he is concerned with the possibility of communism, which is to say, the possibility of overcoming capitalism as the final horizon of social progress, supposedly the 'least bad' social order imaginable. Yet in stark contrast to revolutionary naivety which would treat capitalism as merely the most recent order to be superseded in the endless cycle of upheaval and recovery, Žižek hews to Marx's most precise definition of capitalismⁱ as the continuous upheaval of social relations, allowing only brief periods of recovery which remain exposed to the capricious fluctuations of the market. Capital is disorder itself as the only order; far from simply overthrowing feudalism in the name of a new organization of power, capitalism is the formalization of this undermining movement itself, with new emergent social organizations as subordinate subjects to 'overthrow' itself now enthroned.

Overthrowing capitalism is thus problematic. Whereas the revolutionary question has traditionally been how to prevent a new order from abolishing the revolutionary spirit that instituted it, betraying intoxicated enthusiasm in a sobering morning after, Žižek recognizes that capitalism already provides the ultimate answer. It is a system that has finally achieved undying fidelity to its revolutionary birth, and in so doing has apparently

undercut any possible opposition, submitting itself to a continual revolutionisation more effective than any that might be externally instigated. Žižek therefore concerns himself with the possibility of an oppositional movement that can take this counter-intuitive problematic into account, without simply resorting to the cultivation of modes of resistance that do nothing to fundamentally challenge capitalism, content to accept its basic coordinates while striving to make the precarious life it institutes to some extent more liveable.

If the left should no longer cling to the delusional hope for a revolutionary overthrow of the global capitalist order, nor resign itself to improving local situations rendered excessively dire or unacceptable,ⁱⁱ then what course of action remains open? As he is wont to do, Žižek breaks this deadlock by choosing the impossible third option: rather than either longing for a break with the existing order, or accepting and working within this order, we should recognize capitalism as the disorder that it is, and focus on imposing a new order upon it. The Left should abandon its impotent anti-authoritarian contrarianism and instead champion the stability of order in an increasingly disintegrating world.

[W]hat if today's global capitalism, precisely insofar as it is "world-less," involving a constant disruption of all fixed order, opens up the space for a revolution which will break the vicious cycle of revolt and its reinscription, which will, in other words, no longer follow the pattern of an eventual explosion followed by a return to normality, but will instead assume the task of a new "ordering" against the global capitalist disorder? Out of revolt we should shamelessly pass to enforcing a new order. (Žižek 2009: 130)

To fully grasp the sense of this prescription, we should contrast it with Žižek's criticism of Alain Badiou for endorsing an apparently identical position:

[Badiou] draws the "logical" conclusion that, in a "worldless" universe (which is the contemporary universe of global capitalism), the aim of emancipatory politics should be the precise opposite of its "traditional" *modus operandi* – the task today is to form a new world, to propose new Master-Signifiers that would provide "cognitive mapping"... (Žižek 2008: 398)

The problem is not that Badiou endorses the struggle for a new order or new world, but the manner in which he conceives this task of ordering. Žižek shows how, on the basis of two apparently contradictory interpretations of the Chinese Cultural Revolution,ⁱⁱⁱ Badiou concludes that politics is inseparable from the party/State form, and that emancipatory politics can no longer be successfully pursued within this form. (Žižek 2008: 401) This apparent impasse leads Badiou to endorse resignation to local politics, incapable of

fundamentally challenging capitalism itself, instead concerned only with mitigating its various adverse effects in particular contexts.

Žižek warns that the logic of Badiou's position demands radical politics should seek neither to destroy the state, nor to seize control of it, but only to supplement the order imposed by the State by ordering localities that fall in the latter's blind spots, hence being particularly vulnerable to the corrosive forces of capital. (ibid: 402-3) Against this resignation, Žižek conceives of an ordering which would not shy away from State power:

if the state is here to stay, if it is impossible to abolish the state (and capitalism), why act with a distance towards state? Why not act with(in) the state? ... [I]f the space of emancipatory politics is defined by a distance towards the state, are we not abandoning the field (of the state) all too easily to the enemy? Is it not crucial what form state power takes? (ibid: 402)

Žižek rejects the alternative of withdrawal from or seizure of State power, which determines the nature of Badiou's proposed 'ordering', once again opting for the excluded third option:

Instead of taking a distance from the state, the true task should be to make the state itself work in a non-statal mode. The alternative "either struggle for state power (which makes us the same as the enemy we are fighting) or resist by withdrawing to a position of distance from the state" is false –both its terms share the same premise, that the state-form, in the way we know it today, is here to stay, so that all we can do is either take over the state or take a distance towards it. Here, one should shamelessly repeat the lesson of Lenin's State and Revolution: the goal of revolutionary violence is not to take over state power, but to transform it, radically changing its functioning, its relationship to its base... (Žižek 2009: 130-1)

The way out of the deadlock with which we began is not an abstract negation of capitalist disorder through a return to traditional order, either in the active form of championing the state, or in the passive form of withdrawing into its interstices. Rather, the negation of traditional order by capitalist disorder must itself be negated, resulting in a determinate negation distinct from the original starting point: we must impose a new order intent on its own transformation, employing disorder rather than excluding it, so as to combat a disorder intent on its own permanence, which instrumentalises order rather than abolishing it.

In this context, Žižek's concern with the recent revolts surrounding the Iranian presidential elections appears more than topical. These revolts exemplify the very

precarious political logic Žižek claims is capable of circumventing the deadlocks of revolutionary naivety versus resigned reformism on the one hand, and of appropriation of versus withdrawal from the State apparatus on the other. The intent of this paper is explicate this logic in the context of the protests of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's reelection. To do so, I will draw not only on Žižek's work, but also on that of several Iranian philosophers writing in the wake of the protests to demonstrate that this logic is not a mere 'Western fantasy', but is in fact indigenous to the Iranian political situation itself.

Post-revolutionary Iran has repeatedly witnessed radical politicization that refuses to shy away from seizure of State power, most notably in the events surrounding the "2nd of Khordad Movement". This began on that date (May 23rd on the Gregorian Calendar) in 1977, with the dramatic electoral victory of reformist candidate Mohammad Khatami, and lasted for the duration of his two terms as President of the Republic. Khatami instituted a series of sweeping reforms which significantly 'secularized' the nation which, since the revolution, had been subject to great social constraint at the hands of the ruling theocratic hierarchy, known as the Nezam.

Khatami's victory, and the social change he championed, was far from the ineffective spectacle so often imagined by the radical Left to be the be-all-end-all of representative democracy. As Morad Farhadpour and Omid Mehrgan claim,

On the 2nd of Khordad, for the first time since the revolution, we encountered a dichotomy between the republican state and the totalitarian system of the Islamic Republic of Iran. [...] This duality was intensified as a result of the fact that the leader of the opposition, Khatami, was at the same time the head of the state. (Farhadpour and Mehrgan 2009: unpaginated)

Khatami's presidency was far from symbolic, and rather demonstrated that democratic elections can serve to introduce a genuine antagonism into the structure of the State. Iran was particularly well-poised for such a democratically-legitimated challenge to State power given the unique structure of the Islamic Republic, subordinate as it was to the absolute authority of the Nezam. With Khatami's election, the people of Iran not only posed a nominal challenge to the Nezam, but effectively undermined its authority in reforming the archaic system which had so strangled their social and economic life.

If republican democracy should stand accused of falsely claiming to secure popular sovereignty, Iran would have certainly been a primary example, in that the republic has been, since its formation, principally subordinate to a higher sovereign power. Yet despite

this, the 2nd of Khordad Movement demonstrated the potential such an apparent simulacrum can possess, capable of constituting a real threat to the non-democratic power it dissimulates. Thus, Iran demonstrates that elections can have a political potency beyond cynical theatrics, able to prise apart the supposedly popular form from the specific content that over-determines it – in this case, that of secular democracy from religious fundamentalism. (Farhadpour and Mehrgan 2009)

The massive and sustained protests that followed the highly contentious and suspect electoral victory of conservative incumbent Ahmadinejad in the 2009 electoral victory were about far more than questioning the accuracy of the official results. Ali Alizadeh recounts the absurdity of demands that protesters justify their reaction:

the international media, claiming impartiality, insisted that the reformists provide hard objective evidence in support of their claim that the June 12 election has been rigged. But despite their empiricist attitude, the media missed obvious facts due to their lack of familiarity with the socio-historical context. Although the reformists could not possibly offer any figures or documents, because the whole show was single-handedly run by Ahmadinejad's ministry of interior, anyone familiar with Iran's recent history could easily see what was wrong with this picture. (Alizadeh 2009: unpaginated)

What was wrong was not merely the obvious discrepancies in the official tally. The offence was not the apparent theft of the election, but the theft of democracy itself, which less than a decade earlier was still a vital resource in the popular struggle against the theocratic state. Whereas the Republic was formerly a lure for the frustrated desire of the people that they subsequently turned against the luring agent, the 2009 election announced the death of the Islamic Republic, the final confiscation of the weapon of democracy in favor of a more direct and brutal assertion of the Nezam's authority. "The moment of truth for the death of the Islamic Republic came when Ayatollah Khamenei broke with tradition and declared Mahmoud Ahmadinejad the victor in the election even before the polls had closed." (Taheri 2009: unpaginated) The protests that followed were far from reactions to the unfair loss of the election, justified or not; they were expressions of outrage inspired by the death of democracy itself.

This dimension was totally absent from the coverage of the protests in Western Media, as has been pointed out by Žižek and others. This coverage, whether slanted left or right, fundamentally misrepresented the stakes. In every case, the question was which candidate represented whose interests: was Ahmadinejad a tool of the Nezam, or was he

a populist advocate of the poor and an anti-imperialist hero? Did Mir Hossein Mousavi^{iv} represent the growing urban middle class and their agenda of secular reform? Was this a subterfuge obscuring a program of liberalization and privatization, in accord with the whims of Capital? Or was he just another head of the same conservative hydra as Ahmadinejad?

Žižek notes the coordinates shared by these disparate interpretations: “all these versions read the Iranian protests as a conflict between Islamic hard-liners and pro-Western liberal reformists. That is why they find it so difficult to locate Mousavi...” (Žižek 2009b: unpaginated) They all understand the race in terms of this dichotomy, which, according to Farhadpour and Mehrgan, was first explicated by Khatami’s reform movement in the challenge it posed to clerical authority. Yet Farhadpour and Mehrgan claim this is far from a straightforward opposition: while the Iranian Left does want secular reform and socio-economic improvement, they are attentive to the threat posed by the neoliberal restructuring which so regularly accompanies such progress. They insist that the movement represented by Khatami and Mousavi is poised between the Scylla of fundamentalist archaism and the Charybdis of neoliberal globalisation, attentive to the dangers of each extreme, and concerned with circumventing this double bind.

[T]he progressive and socialist opposition in Iran is faced with the unprecedented, hard task of fighting on two fronts: against religious fanaticism and the authoritarian factions in a semi-democratic government, as well as against Iran’s integration into global capitalism (as a backward, raw material producing country). [...] We are a handful of schizophrenics who are both for and against progress, development, capitalism, state management and so on. (Farhadpour and Mehrgan 2009)

The nuance of their presentation is key here: what appears as two opposed directions in which Iran might head, one regressive and the other progressive, are in fact mutually implicated, inseparable phenomena. Iran is not excluded from the global economy by virtue of its stubborn conservative backwardness; quite the contrary, it is integrated as backward, as wilfully undeveloped, reduced to a reservoir of raw materials, lacking infrastructure capable of using these materials. Social repression and instability only ensure Iran remains stuck in such a subordinate, though no less integrated position.^v As Saeed Rahnema points out, the Nezam are not a protectionist guard against exposure to the world market, but only local opportunists with the same *modus operandi* as global investors: “The Ayatollahs on both sides are ‘market-oriented capitalists,’ so are the leaders of the Islamic Guards, who run industries, control trade monopolies, and are major land developers.” (Rahnema 2009: unpaginated)

Mousavi and the movement he represents posed a threat great enough to require the dissolution of the Republic precisely because they broke with this amphiboly of the only superficially antagonistic positions of capitalist liberalism and religious fundamentalism. The Republic was able to function, just as any 'formal democracy', so long as it was an arbiter of the contending interests of particular groups, a function that was interrupted the moment it played host to a general challenge to the structure of the State itself. In this regard, the reform movement brought to bear within the medium of democracy a challenge to what Žižek, following Badiou, conceives as its 'constitutive corruption'. Far from the simple corruption of elected officials, this refers "to the form of democracy per se, and the way it reduces politics to the negotiation of private interests."

[M]ulti-party liberal democracy 'represents' – instantiates – a certain vision of society, politics and the role of the individuals in it. Multi-party liberal democracy 'represents' a precise vision of social life in which politics is organised so that parties compete in elections to exert control over the state legislative and executive apparatus. (Žižek 2009b)

So long as this was the case, there was no real threat to the Nezam, which is situated above the State, and with whose interests every democratic contender must accord, lest they find their legitimately won control undermined. True antagonism arises when such a contender's interest cannot accord with that of the Nezam, when this interest is necessarily excluded by the clerical-capitalist nexus, constituting the embryonic destruction of this nexus. While the reform movement began modestly, falling short of such antagonism, and even remained rather tame with Mousavi, its interests were ultimately incapable of according with either pole of the nexus, and hence fundamentally endangered it.

Mousavi's massive popular support threatened to introduce an larval form of such an antagonism into the democratic forum, and to eventually undermine it as mediator of narrow, private interests. Hence, the constitutive corruption of democracy should in no way deter us from engaging with it. We should recognize how this definitive hypocrisy can be exploited to emancipatory ends.

This is not to say that democratic elections should be despised; the point is only to insist that they are not in themselves an indication of the true state of affairs; as a rule, they tend to reflect the predominant doxa. [...] There can be democratic elections which enact a moment of truth: elections in which, against its sceptical-cynical inertia, the majority momentarily 'awakens' and votes against the hegemonic

opinion... (Žižek 2009b)

Mousavi's campaign may have been such a 'moment of truth'. He was a democratic candidate representing a challenge to the very intrinsically corrupt structure of the democratic Republic itself, and so the Republic had to be pre-emptively killed for its own good, while the determination of its replacement was still in the hands of the Nezam. The revolts that followed the assassination of the Republic preserved this truth, amounting to an authentically 'democratic' outcome.

Mousavi's campaign instigated a genuine politicization in refusing to reduce politics to the negotiation of private interests. "Mousavi emphasized the universal demands of 'people' who wanted to be heard and counted as political subjects."^{vi} (Alizadeh 2009) It is this figure of 'the people' that forms the very essence of authentic politics. "To use Italian theorist Giorgio Agamben's terminology, it is a politics of 'people against People' – that is, voiceless, suppressed people against 'People' as officially constructed by the state." (Farhadpour and Mehrgan 2009) In this regard, Mousavi's supporters are "easily, but strongly, distinguished from Ahmadinejad's anonymous masses dependent on state charity." (Alizadeh 2009) They refuse to allow themselves to be determined from outside, in terms of interests imposed upon them: "The ruling elite, using a populist rhetoric, tends to single out a certain section of the nation and call it the People. [...] This image of the People is daily imposed on the masses and inscribed onto the body politic." (Farhadpour and Mehrgan 2009) Yet the self-determination they instead opt for is also irreducible to that of particular identity groups articulating their narrow, private interests as demands upon the State. This was the "liberal option" favored by the other reform candidate, Mehdi Karroubi, whose campaign was based upon "differentiating people into identity groups with different demands (women, students, intellectuals, ethnicities, religious minorities, etc)" (Alizadeh 2009), championing a "subjectless process" of presenting these demands "to the almighty state and act[ing] as their passive, divided, depoliticised supporters." (Farhadpour and Mehrgan 2009)

In contrast to these two forms of depoliticization, Mousavi's movement constituted itself as a people neither deprived of self-determination, nor divided by particular interests, but instead united over and against such trivial division.

Mousavi's people, as the collective appearing in the rallies, is made of religious women covered in chador walking hand in hand with westernized young women who are usually prosecuted for their appearance; veterans of war in wheelchairs

next to young boys for whom the Iran-Iraq war is only an anecdote; and working class who have sacrificed their daily salary to participate in the rally next to the middle classes. (Alizadeh 2009)

Such a universalism is at the heart of the political and of democracy. Žižek, citing Jacques Rancière, claims that politics proper appeared for the first time

in Ancient Greece when the members of demos (those with no firmly determined place in the hierarchical social edifice) not only demanded that their voice be heard against those in power, those who exerted social control [...] even more, they [...] presented themselves as the representatives, the stand-ins, for the Whole of Society, for the true Universality [...] [P]olitical conflict designates the tension between the structured social body in which each part has its place, and ‘the part of no part’ which unsettles this order on account of the empty principle of universality... (Žižek 1999: 188)

While Mousavi’s supporters have been characterized, especially in the West, as being composed primarily of “the middle class and their gilded youth” (Žižek 2009b), there is evidence that this is misleading. Hamid Dabashi cites the research of professor Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, which reveals that the Iran’s youth are disproportionately unemployed, as are female university entrants; both of these demographics skew significantly in support of Mousavi. (Dabashi 2009: unpaginated) Yet inclusion in the ‘part of no part’ need not result from an ‘objective condition’ like unemployment, and instead occurs as soon as one refuses to place the satisfaction of private interests above “people’s dignity as a key political right” (Farhadpour and Mehrgan 2009). This dignity must be afforded to all, including those who are given no place and no voice within the existing order. Such a universal dignity cannot be equated with the identitary inclusion of all particular groups within the space of demand, as it amounts to a principle to which the satisfaction of all demands must be subordinated.

The mode of political subjectivity championed by Mousavi is thus neither one of particular, private interest, nor of desperate and stupefied masses, but one that transcends divisions and overcomes heteronomy. Alizadeh suggests that this bears an essential relation to the Iranian revolution:

This subjectivity, emphasized by Mousavi during his campaign and fully incarnated in the rallies of the past few days, is constituted by political intuition, creativity and recollection of the ‘79 revolution (no wonder that people so quickly reached an unexpected maturity, best manifested in the abstention from violence in their silent demonstrations). (Alizadeh 2009)

The connection is most evident in that, in attempting to circumvent the double bind of heteronomous un-reason and autonomous but private reason, the movement has been forced to experiment, to create itself without any guide from above, now deprived of the neutral democratic space that formerly entertained them. Dabashi also notes this parallel unpredictability and creativity, but nonetheless refuses to draw the connection between the two events:

The fact is that we really don't know how this uprising is going to pan out, and yet we seem to be in too much of a rush to assimilate it backward to inherited assumptions that may have lost their validity in face of this new reality. I am convinced that we are witness to something quite extraordinary, perhaps even a social revolution that is overriding its economic roots. Although there are many similarities, this is a much different event than the 1977-1979 Islamic Revolution.” (Dabashi 2009)

Yet to pose the relation in terms of similarity and assimilation is misleading. As Farhadpour and Mehrgan put it:

Many of the protesters' slogans are new versions of those adopted in 1979. The routes of demonstrations are the same as those against the shah. But this does not mean that people are imitating the 1979 revolution; there are many new possibilities and creativities, many formal and thematic inventions. (Farhadpour and Mehrgan 2009)

This sense of “repetition without mere imitation” (ibid) is a perennial theme for Žižek, and one he also picks up on in movement supporting Mousavi.

[Mousavi] stands for the resuscitation of the popular dream that sustained the Khomeini revolution. It was a utopian dream, but one can't deny the genuinely utopian aspect of what was so much more than a hardline Islamist takeover. Now is the time to remember the effervescence that followed the revolution, the explosion of political and social creativity, organisational experiments and debates among students and ordinary people. That this explosion had to be stifled demonstrates that the revolution was an authentic political event, an opening that unleashed altogether new forces of social transformation: a moment in which 'everything seemed possible.' What followed was a gradual closing-down of possibilities as the Islamic establishment took political control. (Žižek 2009b)

It is at this point, in the relation between the 'utopian opening' and its 'closing-down', that Žižek approaches Michel Foucault's oft-criticized engagement with the Iranian revolution.^{vii} Far from the consensus that this engagement was a naive Orientalist mistake, overlooking

the revolution's pseudo-fascist character, Žižek claims Foucault took the right step in supporting it. He failed, however, in his analysis of this event:

The framework within which Foucault operates in his analysis of the Iranian situation is the opposition between the revolutionary Event, the sublime enthusiasm of the united people where all internal differences are momentarily suspended, and the pragmatic domain of the politics of interests, strategic power calculations... (Žižek 2008: 115)

This too-abstract distinction becomes problematic when considering the “reprehensible”, repressive social policies that were instituted on the basis of such enthusiasm. Foucault concludes that no one engaged in such a struggle can be innocent of desire for the institution of a new social order, a desire fundamentally tainted by repressive urges, as this desire sustains the revolutionary passion it finally betrays. (ibid: 112) On this basis, Foucault distinguishes between revolt, which exists purely in the gap between orders, and revolution as the “the reinscription of a revolt into the process of strategic-political calculation”. (ibid: 111)

Žižek's wager, on the other hand, is that the utopian dimension of revolt, while perhaps bearing a necessary relation to its own closure in a new order, is nonetheless not extinguished, but “transposed into a virtual state”. (ibid: 394) This dimension, while potentially opening onto emancipatory politics, equally and essentially leaves one open to truly monstrous potentials as well. It is for this reason that Žižek devotes so much effort to the analysis of Stalin and the catastrophic failure of Bolshevism. In the face of the monstrous potential that lurks within us, both as individuals and as social bodies, it is easy to hide beyond the mask of our ‘true inner selves’, our identities as transparent and unremarkable, and on the basis of which politics is reduced to the negotiation of the interests deducible from this inner essence. Yet Žižek claims that this is the predominant form of ideology today,^{viii} and as such it tempts us into a cowardly resignation in the face of politics, which is to say, in the face of the possibility of universal emancipation.

Žižek claims that Foucault fell into such an ideological trap with his aesthetics of the self, which was ultimately a defense against the monstrous potentials lurking in the utopian dimension of revolt. Žižek, on the contrary, champions resoluteness in the face of these potentials, which emerge precisely when struggle is organized around the ‘part of no part’, rather than the particular interests of private groups. (ibid: 116) Only such a struggle can culminate in the institution of a new order that, rather than simply reinstating cynical-

pragmatic realpolitik, instead organizes the State on the basis of the excluded – even if this requires a dangerous foray into a world that is no longer covered by any authority.

To return to our initial question, it is on such a basis that Žižek conceives the ‘revolutionizing’ of capitalism: as an ordering centred on the part of no part, or in Marxist terms, a State in the hands of the dictatorship of the proletariat.^{ix} Take this exemplary passage from the Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, in which Marx claims that the possibility of emancipation is to be found:

[i]n the formation of a class with radical chains, a class of civil society which is not a class of civil society, a class [Stand] which is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere which has a universal character because of its universal suffering and which lays claim to no particular right because the wrong it suffers is not a particular wrong but wrong in general; [...] a sphere which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from – and thereby emancipating – all other spheres of society...” (Marx 1992: 256)

The dictatorship of the proletariat would amount to an order whose purpose is the dissolution and dismantling of the prior order. It is not the assertion of the interests of one class against others, but the systematic destruction of class itself in the name of the universal inclusion of all in the proletariat, as agent of dissolution/universalization.

Whereas capitalism functions on the basis of the disavowal of the utopian opening, its dissimulation behind the mask of private interests and particular identity, relegating its determination to the automatic movement of an abstract economic function, communism would seize upon and valorize this dimension, subjectivizing the people on this basis alone, and making the negotiation of this opening the primary political task. In this way, the opening will be sustained even after its inclusion in a new order, in the form of a dream or promise that survives every betrayal. Žižek calls such a resolute and stubborn seizure of this dimension, refusing to relinquish it in the name of a return to the everyday, a “leftist politics of melancholy”. (Žižek 2008: 393) Žižek’s engaged with the Iranian revolts because they exemplify such a politics in their repetition of the Revolution, and its resurrection on the 2nd of Khordad, a politics determined “to redeem the lost hopes and aspirations of the revolution”, and “to revive the unfinished hopes and dreams of those days.” (Farhadpour and Mehrgan 2009)

- i Most concisely represented in the first chapter of the Communist Manifesto, the famous passage to which Žižek's question implicitly refers: "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. [...] All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned..." (Marx and Engels 2002: 223)
- ii These two positions really amount to two sides of the same coin, with resigned focus on reforming local conditions supplementing the impotent quietism of anticipatory patience.
- iii see Badiou 2006; Badiou 2009.
- iv The reformist candidate following in Khatami's footsteps, even earning the latter's endorsement after he dropped out of the race (Najibullah 2009: unpaginated)
- v Žižek has recently made the same point in regards to the Congo, whose civil strife is a sign not of exclusion, but of the sinister underside of globalization.
- vi Spelling of Mousavi has been changed throughout for consistency.
- vii see Afary and Anderson 2005.
- viii see Žižek 2009: 39-47
- ix Žižek explicitly identifies the 'part of no part' with the proletariat; see Žižek 1999: 188-9. There is good reason, moreover, to believe that Marx himself conceived of the latter along such lines, rather than as a purely economico-sociological category. See for instance the strategic discussion in The Communist Manifesto, where Marx and Engels explicitly claim, "the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population", and then describe how the constitution of this revolutionary body only begins with factory workers, gradually growing to include the entire social body, universally capable of admitting everyone insofar as they relinquish their particular interests. (Marx and Engels 2002: 228-9)

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