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Radical Love and Žižek's Ethics of Singularity

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Introduction

While remaining true to a Lacanian ethical framework, Slavoj Žižek has extended his commitment to the ethics of psychoanalysis by incorporating Christian materialism and St. Paul's "radical love" into his theory of the act; as that which unleashes the power of negativity capable of shattering the very foundations of our being and completely changes the coordinates of the fantasmatic supplement of the desire system. Žižek's ethics is built around shrugging off the "Other of the Other" and is formed in sharp distinction and in conversation with Levinasian ethics, Judith Butler's precarity ethics, Habermasian communicative rationality, and the primary target of his ethics is postmodern liberal multiculturalism. Ultimately, these modalities of ethics neglect, for Žižek, what is the fundamental ground of struggle and radicalism required to break the subject from the fantasmatic and ideological strictures in the symbolic from which it is enmeshed.

This paper seeks to develop the contours of Žižek's politico-ethical project. The

ethical problem for any ethics of psychoanalysis is understanding the subject caught in the libidinal deadlock of the “death of the big Other.” The Other, as we learn from Freud and Lacan, inhabits a thing-like, traumatizing composition, and in order to render bearable our coexistence with this thingliness of the Other in the real, we turn to the symbolic order that is either deprived of this monstrous “thingness” resulting in a flat, Habermasian lifeless and regulated sphere of communication, devoid of desire, or an excessive desire that is unable to be assimilated into the symbolic and teetering on fantasy (Lacan 1973: 171).

To speak of an ethics of psychoanalysis without placing ethics in relation to the political would risk falling into the pervasive apolitical co-optation of psychoanalysis as merely a project that seeks to safeguard enjoyment. Most emblematic of this gesture is Jacques Alain Miller’s “ironist” approach that argues we must maintain the stability of society by balancing the necessary symbolic-semblances and keeping at distance the bodily Real of jouissance. This keeping at bay of the Real must be problematized, for Žižek, through a reading of Lacan’s *Encore Seminar*, where we find that the jouissance of the Real in-Itself is made of a semblance, thereby keeping at bay the Real only goes to affirm the illusion that Truth might be discovered in the Real alone. Because the Real is a semblance of a semblance, Žižek locates ideology,

Not primarily in taking seriously the network of symbolic semblances which encircle the hard core of jouissance; at a more fundamental level, ideology is the cynical dismissal of these semblances as “mere semblances” with regard to the Real of jouissance (Žižek 2012: 971).

Žižek’s “third way ethics” circumvents the predominant ideological positions at both a practical-political level and meta-theoretical level, a position that I refer to as an “ethics of singularity.” The ethics of singularity circumvents the liberal multiculturalist modality that busily seeks to maintain a distance and proximity towards the jouissance of the Real, as well as the conservative reactionary position, that embraces the immersion into the Real as a source of truth. At a meta-ethical level, Žižek’s third way ethical approach is isomorphic to the practical-political critique by going beyond Lacan’s two ethical positions caught between desire/Law and lethal/suicidal immersion into the Thing.

Žižek’s ethics of singularity resides first in the ethical act, that pre-political abyssal act, which because of the death of the big Other, involves a prelude to all moral action as such, and by extension results in the “political suspension of the ethical.” Caught in this political suspension, Žižek’s ethics, while not providing an ethical praxis,

goes beyond merely a meta-ethical critique of the ethics of psychoanalysis and liberal multiculturalism. If ethics itself cannot be given autonomy from the political, the ethical act, that radical Hegelian night of the world power that unleashes the power of negativity that shatters the fantasmatic coordinates of the desire system. Before turning to the ethical act, we must first develop an account of Žižek's multitudinous ethical project, and develop a theory of the subject in this context.

Towards a Žižekian Account of Ethics

For Freud and Lacan, the Christian demand to “love thy neighbor as thyself” inspired a series of important writings on the neighbor from a psychoanalytic perspective, which fundamentally gave shape to the larger field of the ethics of psychoanalysis. In Seminar VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan extends Freud's theory of the neighbor as “das Ding” (the Thing) into this own system of thought. Lacan claims that the neighbor is a pre-symbolic object characterized primarily by affect, appearing in the symbolic register prior to any and all representation. Das Ding's composition is substance-less, a void, and is structurally equivalent to the neighbor. The Other takes on this “thing-like” character for Lacan because the confrontation with jouissance produces an excess that always resists symbolization in the register of the real. This Other-as-object is then filled over by a certain distance, what Lacan refers to as proximity, proximity that is the space where fantasy resides. For Lacan, reality only occurs in so far as the real is not fully experienced, i.e. reality happens at the shortest distance from the real through fantasy, which is why the ugliness of the real stands for existence itself, and the neighbor is located in the real.

Lacan comments, “the neighbor is identical to the subject, in the same way that one can say the *Nebenmensch* that Freud speaks of as the foundation of das Ding as the neighbor.” Lacan's theory of the neighbor-as-das-Ding, as we learn from his seminar, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* is rooted in Freud's conception of das Ding. Here is what Freud says of the neighbor:

“and so the complex of the neighbor divides into two constituent parts the first of which impresses through the constancy of its composition, its persistence as a Thing, while the other is understood by means of memory-work...” (Freud 1938: 426 – 427).

Lacan characterizes Das Ding as “a primordial function located at the level of the unconscious *Vorstellungen*” (Lacan 1959: 62). At the moral-ethical level, the neighbor-as-object ultimately indicates that there is no sovereign good, and thus no possibility to constitute the good in the realm of the subject because the Thing remains outside of morality. Lacan divides the good based on this traumatic intrusion of das Ding; there is good and bad and then there is das Ding. The Thing remains unfathomable, as an excess outside of the moral relationship.

The postmodern multiculturalist mode of engaging the other, as Žižek notes, runs along two primary modalities: that of the New Age, and the Judeo-Christian, both of which are merely displacing a form of pathos onto an Other that is more authentic, and this ends up causing a sort of inverted racism (Žižek 2006: 165 – 167). This inverted racism entails a matter of proximity to the other of *jouissance*. The prevailing mode of postmodern alterity supports the resurgence of what Herbert Marcuse called “repressive tolerance,” whereby the Other is deprived of their own cultural identity and forced to enter the totality of the repressive capitalist culture, leading Wendy Brown to posit the ideological nature of tolerance and “tolerance projects,” particularly those deployed by the state (Marcuse 1965: 33). One way to understand this process of multicultural tolerance from a psychoanalytic standpoint is that through encountering the Other at the level of das Ding (the Thingliness of the Other), without depriving that Other of its symbolic *jouissance*, which the liberal multiculturalist requires by its very nature and operation, you perform an exclusivist/racist act due to the distance this act maintains towards the Other.

The overarching superego demand that plagues the subject of multicultural tolerance is most acutely associated with guilt when facing the ethical injunction “to love thy neighbor as thyself,” forcing the subject to know all of the details of the Other and to maintain a certain distance that is deprived of access to the real of *jouissance*. The primary procedure for the multicultural and Judeo-Christian modalities of alterity is to keep at bay the proximity of the neighbor-as-thing inhabited with an uncanny *jouissance*. By contrast to these modalities, Lacan argues that one truly encounters the Other not when one discovers her values, dreams, and wishes, but when the subject encounters the neighbor as *jouissance*. As Žižek has suggested, what the predominant liberal multiculturalist model has neglected is this very direct encounter with the “traumatic kernel” of the Other in favor of PC engagement with the “decaffeinated Other.” Žižek comments in *The Abyss of Freedom*:

“I encounter the other in her moment of *jouissance*. When I discern in her a tiny detail – a compulsive gesture, an excessive facial gesture – that signals the intensity of the real of *jouissance*. This encounter is always traumatic, there is something at least minimally obscene about it, I cannot simply integrate it into my universe, there is always a gap separating me from it” (Žižek 1997: 25).

The Interpassive Subject of Ideology

Before looking at the ethical approach to *short-circuit* these modalities of postmodern alterity, we must locate the subject of late capitalism that becomes the target for the ethical act. While Žižek has written extensively on the perverted subject, his work on interpassivity presents an even clearer context for understanding the way that ideology interpellates the subject of late capitalism. In a late capitalist world with our lives constantly bombarded by activity, interpassivity arises as a mode of fetishism that structures the symbolic space of our belief systems. Our socio symbolic, while ultimately remains a dead order; it is also a zone of constant activity resulting in what Lacan refers to as the “over-burdened demand to enjoy.” This buildup of pressure from the demand to enjoy causes the subject to delegate a level of passivity onto the scene of hyperactivity, relegating belief of the efficacy of the symbolic order that sustains the activity onto an Other. Žižek points out in many places, particularly in his text *On Belief*, how this “externalization of belief,” or interpassivity belongs to the realm of the symbolic, and enjoyment belongs to the realm of the real. Why? Because enjoyment can never reach homeostasis in the rush of activity and flux, remaining caught in the *objet petit a*, an infinite tension around the object of desire, never reaching fulfillment, thus it remains part of the dimension of the real.

Žižek’s theory of interpassivity is the idea that belief in the symbolic efficiency of our capitalist life world, what we have been referring to as the symbolic, consists of a certain, “believing or enjoying through the other.” Borrowing and modifying the concept of interpassivity from Robert Pfaller, Žižek points out in *On Belief* how the interpassive subject externalizes one’s beliefs onto an Other, wherein one doesn’t merely believe through the Other, but belief itself functions like a defense mechanism. Thus, ideology is the process of taking externalized belief as real, when it is in fact an externalized part of our consciousness, or subjectivity. Externalized belief in the market and in capitalism is itself a form of reality that we struggle to disavow and to delegate onto an other, and

remains dependent on the creation of an Other of the Other. In the transfer of belief onto this other that is now a stand in for the failure of the big Other, the subject is filled with a series of superego injunctions, most common of which of course and which sets the entire scene for the capitalist subject is the demand to enjoy. The interpassive subject feels depleted and withdrawn from the realm of the symbolic, resulting in an ambiguous relation to one's own desire – a question that we will turn to now.

Do not the “culture jamming” Yes Men provide the model par excellence for how to short circuit the fantasy of neoliberalism and in so doing reveal the contours of the interpassive subject? The Yes Men placate symbolic authority by assuming the identity of powerful businessmen, activists, and politicians at corporate events, where they make exceedingly progressive promises to cure major social ills. They name their activism “identity construction” and the net result of their symbolic interventions is simply an exposure of the ideological contours of our late capitalist life world, showing how the symbolic authority models we have unconsciously relied upon intricately manage our belief and allegiance to the big Other. Indeed, what is most striking about their activism is that when they impersonate a corporate CEO, or a senior government official, and are occupying the seat of symbolic authority, the symbolic efficiency of the actual leaders and consultants they are impersonating don't raise one bit of suspicion from the listeners, and they thus reveal the symbolic efficiency for what it often is: full of cynical and interpassive allegiance to a series of dead laws. The overall result of the Yes Men's identity construction interventions is that they show systemic failures at a macro scale and thus are able to turn the prevailing neoliberal critique of social inequalities by “the system” and preferring the reductionist individual blaming of “just a few bad apples” that cause the abuses of the system, straight on its head. It shows that not only is there a system that perpetuates this logic of blind allegiance, but that most often when we think we are acting against something, a new office policy, or a change in management, we are operating on a level of conformity to a big Other that eludes our conscious grasp. This is precisely why the Yes Men open a space for new identifications with the Other. The Yes Men's capacity to move the interpassive subject into a new identification with the big Other resembles Lacan's *passage a la act*¹, or an act that addresses the big Other and makes solidarity with an identification of the object that reveals the disintegration of the big Other.

If we take the consequences of the Yes Men's activism a step further, we find

¹ *Passage a la act* is a symbolic act addressed to the big Other, it is thus an exit from the symbolic, through identification with the object.

that through their revealing of the symbolic efficiency that sustains our social reality is predicated on a lie. In *The Ticklish Subject*, Žižek points out two fundamental points of symbolic authority: “the pre-symbolic obscene / non-castrated Father *jouissance* and the (dead) father qua the bearer of symbolic authority (the Name-of-the-Father)” (Žižek 2000: 317). The father of “No!” whose authority, like Freud and Kierkegaard observed as arising entirely *ex nihilo* – the best example of which is Abraham’s sacrifice is completely nonexistent in today’s world. What we experience today is an utter inability to synchronize the big Other with *jouissance* – resulting in a disavowal of the real father by the perverted subject, and the creation of a zone of symbolic authority that is inhabited with fantasy and illusion.

On a structural level, fantasy functions to stimulate and promises to cover over the lack in the Other created by the loss of *jouissance* which is traumatic at its core. Since fantasy is also an effect of symbolic castration, it is also a defense mechanism against the fear of symbolic castration. Symbolic castration is defined by Lacan as, “a symbolic lack of an imaginary object,” and symbolic castration is the subject’s first perception of the Other, as not complete, but lacking. Lacan argues that the subject can only maintain psychic normality by accepting this inherent lack of the other; hence symbolic castration plays a normalizing effect on the subject (Evans 1996: 22 – 23).

The Yes Men’s manipulation of and interrogation into this zone of fantasy and exposing of the empty seat of symbolic authority – by temporarily correcting and filling in/exposing the fantasy is what gives their activism not only a de-subjectifying potential, but it reveals the fundamental malleability of symbolic efficiency as such. We might say that the Yes Men reveal *both* the cynicism that sustains our public allegiance to the Law, and the utter emptiness of the commands that orient us to follow this law. What holds a community together most deeply, Žižek notes, “is not so much identification with the Law that regulates the community’s normal everyday circuit, but rather identification with a specific form of transgression from the Law, of the Law’s suspension (in psychoanalytic terms) with a specific form of enjoyment (Žižek 1996: 55). This identification with the law is where we will now turn.

Towards the Radical Act: Love and Desire

Lacan’s intense form of desire as *das Ding* is precisely what he urges the subject not to renounce. Lacan’s ethico-political message in his public seminars during May 1968

protests in France was that the revolutionaries (students and labor leaders in particular) must act in conformity with their desire, even though he despised the anarchism of May 68', at one point declaring that the students will, "need a new master!" Žižek rejects those Lacanian's who prefer a fundamental renunciation of desire as the condition of access to desire, arguing that such an ethical act is antithetical to Lacan's ethical theory and to the very discovery of Freud's death drive. Zizek comments in *The Ticklish Subject*:

"To desire something other than its continued 'social existence,' and thus to fall 'into some kind of death,' to risk a gesture by means of which death is 'courted or pursued,' indicates precisely how Lacan reconceptualized the Freudian death drive as the elementary form of the ethical act" (Zizek 2000: 263).

For Žižek, this is the entire point of the Antigone reading in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. Antigone risks her entire social existence by defying the socio-symbolic power of the City embodied in the ruler (Creon), thereby she 'fell into some kind of death,' i.e. her act of suicide sustained a symbolic death that enabled her to remain excluded from the socio-symbolic space. By offering nothing new but insisting on her unconditional demand, Antigone broke the cycle of desire and performed a truly ethical act. For Žižek, the main point of any authentic act is to gain "free action," and in so doing, to renounce the "transgressive fantasmatic supplement" that attaches us to any given social reality (Zizek 2000: 169). Thus, what differentiates psychoanalyst Eric Santner from Žižek is this radical break with the entire socio-symbolic system in order to reinstitute a fundamentally new ground. Every induction of the subject into the socio-symbolic field consists of a sort of "seduction" whereby one's solidarity with the family/community/institution is always in part sustained by a transgressive enjoyment structure sustained by fantasy. Another moment of release from the hold the Other has on one's superego can be found via shrugging off the other.

Eric Santner's solution to shrugging off the Other of the Other is similar to Žižek but less radical and ultimately seeks to re-integrate into the existing symbolic order. In order to release the subject from the excitation of its superegoic demands, the time and space of this release ends up becoming the very time and space of the ethical encounter. Santner's ethical encounter is an opening of space where new possibilities of being-together, of responsiveness to the Other, can arise (Santner 2003: 103 – 104). In the three-part essay collection *The Neighbor*, Santner applies a reading of the Jewish mystical philosopher Franz Rosenweig's conception of "divine love." By invoking divine

love, Santner is concerned with re-animating the death-driven deadness of the socio-symbolic order, or life that has been thrown by the crisis of symbolic identity and investment into institutions. Like Žižek's project in Christian materialism, Santner looks to the seminal twentieth century text by Rosenzweig, *Star of Redemption* to find Biblical and religious resources for combatting the pervasive undeadness of all biopolitical life. The possibility of reawakening the subject is what Santner refers to "divine love", a psychoanalytic technique of identification that consists of moving beyond the "undeadness of biopolitical life." Like sublimation, Santner's divine live is thus the name for an ethical strategy that resembles that of Žižek's albeit diverts from it in terms of the way it handles the engagement with the symbolic. Divine love is a moving beyond that entails a transformation of the institutional flux that interpolates the subject and brings that subject into the midst of life, i.e. in relation to their neighbor. This movement beyond is what Rosenzweig refers to as "falling in love," a situation that involves more than just positive affirmation of being – falling in love, or might we say, "loving thy neighbor as thyself" is a subsumption into the too muchness itself. Divine love is a subsumption into das Ding itself, a das Ding inhabited with an inherent positivity, having negated the institutional flux of biopolitical dead matter. This form of divine love is ultimately a form of singularization, a form of singling out of the subject, not of excluding (Santner 2003: 65 – 67).

Žižek argues against Santner's divine love and relegates it in the long line of Lacanian's who advocate a type of "heroism of lack," or an owning of das Ding, through an Antigone-like symbolic refusal. Žižek's version of "shrugging off the fantasy of the other," or "desublimation" conversely, results in a traumatic situation, as Žižek notes, "the gap separating beauty from ugliness is thus the gap that separates the real: what constitutes the real is the minimum of idealization the subject needs to sustain the horror of the real." This ugliness of proximity of the neighbor ends up requiring a sublime distance to maintain the neighbor's fantasy frame. Once the neighbor approaches their status of ugly existence in the real, Žižek characterizes the encounter as traumatic. This shrugging off, or de-subjectification from the Other must also be understood intersubjectively.

To understand Žižek's key divergence with Santner on the issue of love, let's look into Žižek's ethical position more deeply. When faced with the ethical situation induced by Lacanian ethics, Žižek identifies two 'options:'

“Is not Lacan’s entire theoretical edifice torn between these two options: between the ethics of desire/Law, and lethal suicidal immersion into the Thing?” (Zizek 1999: 239).

Does not Žižek return to love as a third way out of this ethical impasse through his reading of St. Paul? To pass through the ethical impasse into a form of Pauline agape, Žižek claims the subject arrives at a sort of mystical communion involving, “a passing through the zero-point of night of the world” (Zizek 1999: 165). It is this intense confrontation with the Hegelian “night of the world” and negation that Žižek closely aligns with the radical acts that St. Paul’s community of believers enacted. St. Paul’s ethics presents for Zizek the paradigm for “unplugging” from the big Other’s hold on the socio-symbolic, which is after all the primary aim for an applied Zizekian ethics. Paul’s “unplugging” is achieved only by “throwing the balanced circuit of the universe off the rails” (Zizek 1999: 165).

To fully appreciate how love enters the psychoanalytic system, we must first differentiate love from desire. With desire there is always a gap between the object of desire and its cause, the mediating feature or element that makes this object desirable whereas with love the object is not split off from its cause. With love, “the very distance between the object and cause collapse” (Zizek 1999: 165). The most frequent example Lacan refers to is that of courtly love, the way in which the lady is brought to the level of *das Ding*, her proximity is denied of its *jouissance*. Žižek waives between preferring to simply “exist as a lacking subject” over and above the Antigone version of desire induced symbolic suicide. As we see from the *Plague of Fantasies*, Žižek’s ethical position:

“In no way condones suicidal persistence in following one’s Thing; on the contrary, it enjoins us to remain faithful to our desire as sustained by the Law of maintaining a minimal distance to the Thing – one is faithful to one’s desire by maintaining the gap that sustains desire, the gap on account of which the incestuous *das Ding* forever eludes our grasp” (Zizek 1997: 121).

The core ethical question to Žižek revolves around immersion into the Thing or allegiance to the ethics of desire/Law. “Unplugging” in the Pauline version offers the kind of radical break with the symbolic coordinates via love that Žižek finds satisfactory to completely change the coordinates of the fantasmatic supplement of the desire system. “Unplugging” is what Rosenzweig and Santner refer to as “revelatory conversion,” or an opening to and an acknowledgement of the Other qua stranger, the Other who’s face

manifests a “spectral aura” of *jouissance*. Unplugging results in a freeing of *jouissance* where the Other is externalized, a process that in psychoanalytic terms is actually a freeing of psychosis (Žižek 1997: 86).

Radical Love In the Act of Tahrir Square

Although it is too early to tell if authentic fidelity can be maintained to the event of the Egyptian revolution, did not the coordinated collaboration of Christian and Muslim Egyptians in toppling Mubarak’s regime in 2011 represent an act in the Žižekian sense, as in; they fundamentally defied the neoliberal multiculturalist paradigm, and set in motion a new relation to the big Other of western neoliberal tolerance and multiculturalism. What the entire discourse that UNESCO, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, and other “tolerance promoting” NGO’s are premised upon is a view of the subjects of despotic and totalitarian Muslim countries as somehow lacking the proper agency and autonomy to establish proper modalities of proximity to the Other without the onset of violence breaking out; hence the continual explosion of cross-religious and cross-ethnic violence in under-developed countries. In this narrative, following the cold war, religion and culture represent a sort of return of the repressed, and must be controlled and pacified. The west is after all faced with daily reminders of this libidinal orgy of violence through stories in the media that show the outbreak of unruly mobs into violent confrontation over seemingly trivial issues such as the burning of a Qur’an, suggesting that the subjects of underdeveloped Muslim countries not only lack a proper rationalism to control their rage, but that they require the development of institutional levers to more adequately control this wild *jouissance* of rage.

Political philosopher Wendy Brown in *Regulating Aversion* has thoroughly documented this ideology of tolerance that depoliticizes civic life under the banner of a promotion of neoliberal state interests. In a Foucauldian form of governmentality that promotes a wholesale collaboration between the state, NGO’s, and private citizens, these tolerance promotion projects, for example in Palestine, bring together Muslims and Jews into dialogues to de-fuse this presupposed cross-religious hatred. By participation in a neutralized space regulated by the liberal state’s “value-less” sphere, where all absolute truths can co-exist, the participants in the dialogue recognize a kind of relativism of their culture and its truths to the Other’s are taken out of their fundamental

dimension and the Other is over time humanized, thereby repairing the divisions that stem from ongoing ethno-religious conflict, and thus a pacifying of the ugly jouissance that colors the subject's of pre-tolerant societies is slowly integrated back into society with an enlightened respect for the Other.

Alongside the west's tolerance projects that seek to suppress the unruly jouissance at the core of Muslim subjectivity, there was of course the provoking of cross-religious violence by the Mubarak regime itself for various political reasons. In this version, the Egyptian Christian and Muslim subjects are encouraged to act as an instrument of the big Other and embrace the hidden core of the Law's destructive jouissance, but yet unlike the western version of tolerance, the subject is now faced with the real of the traumatic Other and are encouraged to follow their core desire and destroy it.

Both of these circuits, the western and the totalitarian perversity of Mubarak present two different big Other socio-symbolic coordinates, rooted in a fantasy. At least in the moment of the over throwing of Mubarak, the Tahrir revolutionaries were able to traverse through an act in the psychoanalytic sense of the term, both of these big Other systems, and thus reveal the deadness of both symbolic systems. The true act has a number of components; the most basic of all is that it must redefine the rules of the game. A proper political act unleashes the power of negativity that shatters the very foundations of our being. The act for Lacan involves a full acceptance of one's "second death" and remains authorized not by any big Other, but only by itself, and thus it precludes any self instrumentalization (Žižek 2000: 351). Unlike the worst elements of Occupy Wall Street, the so-called Black Bloc anarchists who over-identify with the system's lack and stage the fiction of the big Other through violence and destruction, the Tahrir Square Egyptian went beyond self-instrumentalization and overidentification with the act of Tahrir Square. As Žižek points out in *The Ticklish Subject*:

"If there is a lesson from psychoanalysis, it is that direct overidentification and self-instrumentalization ultimately coincide: perverse self-instrumentalization (positing oneself as the instrument of the big-Other) necessarily becomes violence as an end-in-itself – to put it in Hegelian terms, the truth of the big Other is its exact opposite: he is staging the fiction of the big Other in order to conceal the jouissance he derives from the destructive orgy of his acts" (Žižek 2000: 380).

Is not this ability to resist both overidentification and self-instrumentalization amidst the act of a revolution a form of Paulinian unplugging and radical love? A perfect example of

this unplugging from the big Other circuitry was when Egyptian Muslims and Christians in Tahrir Square came together despite their supposed hatred and animosity towards one another in solidarity during the revolution. This solidarity invoked a certain shrugging off of the dual fantasy as described above, that of neoliberal western multiculturalism and oppressive totalitarianism as evidenced in one of the most iconic images over the course of the entire protests; that of Coptic Christians protecting fellow Muslim revolutionaries by forming a human chain around the Muslims during their prayer time to fend off the military police. What this image showed to a western audience under the proviso that unruly Muslim mobs are prone to violence is the sheer effectiveness of the ethical act. Their act was not dependent on either of the big Other systems, bringing the revolutionaries into confrontation with a new relation to their very being, a true facing of the radical love that comes with passing through the “night of the world,” and thus entering into a totally new zone of possibility.

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