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The Anthropocene Diet: Perversions of consumers facing the environmental crisis

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Abstract:

This paper aims to discuss human experience in the Anthropocene geological era based on contemporary social theorists as Žižek and Badiou. I propose that, in face of the environmental crisis, techno-ecological corporative style sustainability is a perverse response; and this circuit can only be broken by a radical version of environmentalism that antagonizes the hegemonic discourse of our production-and-consumption system – emphasizing politics. The paper is divided into four parts where: a) the term Anthropocene, created by Paul Crutzen among others, is described as the configuration of an era when biosphere disappears as an externality and becomes subordinated to the ensemble of knowledge and powers of liberal-capitalism; b) based on Alain Badiou, I describe the subject as resulting from an event's truth progressing as fidelity; and the fact that not even the vision of environmental death have had the power to create new environmentalist subjects in place of consumer subjects; c) I analyze the perverse structure of denial that shows the reverse of the hole made positive - namely the appearing of techno-ecological products inviting us to enjoy a qualified consumption as the posited reverse of the environmental crisis; d) finally, after a brief comment about the currents which fight for hegemony in the discursive field of environmentalism, I discuss how the radical ecologism proposes to break the perverse circuit of techno-efficient sustainability by means of political antagonism.

The environmental crisis is a central task in social studies nowadays. It shall be mainly Sociology, Philosophy, Politics, Communications, Psychoanalysis, Economy, Anthropology which will prevent us from hastily taking the signifier 'Nature' as opposed to the signifier 'culture', that is, nature as a place where mankind is not present. The environmental crisis has nothing to do with nature; it is first and foremost a crisis of the combined distribution of knowledge and powers of liberal-capitalism in its present global configuration. This is why, according to Žižek (2011: 425), in order to speak about ecology we should think of it "without nature", as a political strategy.

At the turn of the century, a paper (Crutzen and Stoemer 2000) which became very influential since then, coined the expression *Anthropocene* to mark our geological era, the most advanced period in a long lineal succession¹. This term indicates that humankind itself has become a global geological force (Steffen, Crutzen and McNeill 2007). Even if this idea is not yet peacefully accepted within the scientific community, the notion that we live in an era which name should indicate the influence of human beings became widely spread (Steffen et. al. 2011: 842).

The new period is said to have begun with the industrial revolution and the dissemination of the use of fossil fuels, with consequent intensive generation of greenhouse gases; in a second moment, after World War II, it entered a process of 'great acceleration' (idem: 849). That means to say that within a very short period of time, a mere instant if we consider the time lengths of geological eras, human activity has shaped our planet in our manner. Then in current days we have entered a third moment in which the risks produced before by developed countries are being reproduced by big, populous developing countries (idem: 853).

Therefore, the *Anthropocene* neologism seeks to indicate that man is today the single major element interfering in ecosystems' evolutive paths, which can be verified in three investigation fronts: our planet's climate is undergoing abrupt change caused by the concentration of greenhouse gases produced by economic activities; there is a process in motion of massive loss of biodiversity, the effects of which may be as dramatic as those of Permian and Cretaceous mass extinctions; laboratories have created the capacity to interfere in the genetic code of living beings and thus to reconfigure them at discretion (Sfez 1996; Dryzek and Scholosberg 2009).

From this point of human intervention onwards, it is not possible any more to talk

about threats to nature's organization or equilibrium. It is the very evolution of living beings as a whole that has become, perhaps in an irreversible way, dependent on the conditions imposed by human activities. Žižek reminds us that:

A good counterpoint to such fantasies, based on the notion that nature is a balanced and harmonious cycle distorted by human intervention, is the lesson of an environmental scientist who came to the result that, while one cannot be sure what the ultimate result of humanity's interventions into geo-sphere will be, one thing is sure: if humanity were to stop abruptly its immense industrial activity and let nature on Earth take its balanced course, the result would have been a total breakdown, an imaginable catastrophe. "Nature" on Earth is already to such an extent "adapted" to human interventions, the human "pollutions" are already to such an extent included into the shaky and fragile balance of the "natural" reproduction on Earth, that its cessation would cause a catastrophic imbalance. (Žižek 2012: 94)

Ecology as "the study of the relations between organisms and their environment, or as the study of the interactions defining organisms' distribution and abundance, or still as the study of ecosystems" (Barbault 2011: 9) – a science of specialists, directed to the observation of relations 'exterior to man', at least according how scientific discourse presents itself, – has changed currently into a *hybrid* issue, one 'at the same time real, social and narrated' in the terms used by Latour (2000: 12). Mexican researcher and environmentalist Enrique Leff describes ecological relations as follows:

The evolution and succession of natural ecosystems are the objects of biology and ecology; but the transformation processes of ecosystems do not depend only just on the biologic laws of evolution, being as they are rather affected and supradetermined by the economic appropriation of natural resources. The reproduction of capital cannot be part of ecology's object of study. Thus, the study of ecosystems' transformations requires an articulation of the effects of a production method upon natural and biological effects deriving from the functional structure of each ecosystem. (Leff 2007: 35)

In the *Anthropocene* we cannot say that man lives under the given conditions of a geological era, as he lived in the Holocene, but inversely we should say that it is Nature itself which exists in an era marked by humans. In this way Nature disappears as

something external to human action (Merleau-Ponty 2006), and it becomes a subsidiary of the vicissitudes of our social organization system, that is, an element of our culture. This is the key used by Jameson (2000: 61) to describe our present times as the moment when a “post-modern” manner of existence, as he says, is colonizing the last two fields that had remained as yet adverse to systemic action: Nature and the unconscious².

The green hole

Just as our triumphant modernity reduces Nature to a piece in the gear train of the hegemonic logic of capital, this same Nature becomes indocile, threatening, and a source of nightmares about the permanence of humankind upon Earth. The environmental crisis is exposing the constitutive lack in the core of the liberal-capitalist discourse. This lack is a threat to an identity (Laclau 2000: 43), as it dislocates the objects of value euphorized by consumerism subjects (cars and houses, swimming pools and travels, cosmetics and home appliances) towards another chain of equivalences, now meaning destruction-and-death. Environmental crisis is the new name for the ‘triumphant calamity’ as branded by Adorno e Horkheimer (2006 [1944]: 17), which has taken different forms along the 20th century: it was mustard gas, then Auschwitz, gulag, napalm, the MAD strategy...

In a production-and-consumption system, Nature, as every other element, can only make sense in face of the general equivalence of capital. Well, Nature’s place has traditionally been that of an ‘externality’ (Leff 2007: 75; Alier 2009: 52), a source of raw materials and a receiver of waste. According to Georgescu-Roegen (apud Cechin: 2010), from an economic point of view, the function of the environment has been, all along the history of capitalism, to provide low entropy and to absorb high entropy - this happens, for example, when economic agents remove from Nature the carbon stored in trees of a forest, and then give it back in the form of gas dispersed in the atmosphere. However, this small role of Nature has been modified and it is not possible any more to frame it plainly as a ‘service provider’. It is possible to infer from the word *Anthropocene* an uncommon and risky situation:

The concept of the Anthropocene, as it becomes more well known in the general public, could well drive a similar reaction to that which Darwin elicited. Can human activity really be significant enough to drive the Earth into a new geological epoch? There is one very significant difference, however, between the two ideas, Darwinian evolution and the Anthropocene. Darwin’s insights into our origins provoked outrage,

anger and disbelief but did not threaten the material existence of society of the time. The ultimate drivers of the Anthropocene, on the other hand, if they continue unabated through this century, may well threaten the viability of contemporary civilization and perhaps even the future existence of *Homo sapiens*. (Steffen et. al. 2011: 867)

This situation of crisis and its perspective of death, which is inscribed within a system showing no externality nor possibility of change, is in itself the consummation of a catastrophe, not only its prognostic. Just as Žižek said in words now world-widely divulged, it seems easier to imagine the end of the world than any small change in the liberal-capitalism order:

Up to one or two decades ago, the production-Nature system (the productive-exploiting relations maintained by mankind with Nature and its resources) was perceived as a constant, while everybody sought to imagine different formats for the social organization of production and commerce (fascism or communism as alternatives to liberal capitalism); today, as Frederic Jameson pointed out with sagacity, nobody is considering seriously the possible alternatives to capitalism, while common people's minds are haunted by visions of the future 'collapse of Nature' and the elimination of all life upon Earth. It seems easier to imagine 'the end of this world' than a much smaller change in our method of production, as if liberal-capitalism were the 'reality' that shall somehow survive even in the event of a planetary ecologic catastrophe... (Žižek 1996: 7)

The environmental crisis brings about notions of end and death, like shadows cast upon those beings gifted with manual dexterity and circumvision, if we are to use Heidegger's categories (2006). The subject of production and consumption in the *Anthropocene* can be nothing less than an *environmental-being-to-death*. Thus, as ecologists cry out, 'we throw ourselves head-first against a wall' (Guillaume 2002: 36). Maffesoli (2010: 108) says, for example, that the ecological issue reminds us of 'the nature of things [...] death as that which is originally violent'. Or still, as described by Carlos Walter Porto-Gonçalves: 'From ecological movements there comes a clamor that must gain a deep cultural-political configuration: our society is destroying the crucial sources for its own survival. This clamor carries inside one characteristic that is most distinctly human: the perception of death' (Porto-Gonçalves 2010: 99).

This situation enables Žižek to paraphrase Freud and talk about an 'uneasiness of Nature':

It forces us to give a new notion for Freud's title *Unbehagen in der Kultur*: discontent, uneasiness, unrest in culture. With the latest advancements, this discontent passes from culture to Nature itself: it ceases to be 'natural', the 'dense' and trustworthy background of our lives; it appears now to be a fragile mechanism which may explode any moment in a catastrophic way. (Žižek 2011: 430)

As we said, we may observe that in narratives about the environmental crisis the dream of modernity changes into an apocalyptic nightmare precisely in the *Anthropocene*, when supposedly human will should be able to avoid this. This terror is well known by psychoanalysis, which considers that fear resides in returning things: we are terrified not exactly by new and unknown things, but by near and familiar ones, replicated and presented as strange (Perelson 1994: 42). The environmental crisis does not evoke the terror of Nature with a face, fancied as a self-conscious deity who manifests a desire of vengeance. On the contrary, what it has of most appalling is the automatism of a system addicted to a drive not directed by desire, one which repeats itself as mere replication not forming a differential series (ibidem). To say otherwise, the theme of this horror movie is not that, from where you don't expect, from a lifeless object, a *plus jouissance* emerges (a wall speaks, a rocking chair gains life, a forest moans and so on); but rather that human beings, emptied of their will, behave as vitreous-eyed Zombies. Environmentalist invectives often contain expressions such as "if nothing is done", "if things go on like this" and congeneric others³.

An ecological event?

Facing such an outlook, environmentalist movements ask in perplexity how is it possible that the risk of seeing the end of human life upon Earth be not enough for us to make some change, even a 'modest one', in our production methods as mentioned before. This question may be reinscribed, in terms of the political philosophy of the *event* as proposed by Alain Badiou (1994; 2009), as follows: why the environmental crisis was not the *event* capable of traverse the order of the hegemonic liberal-capitalist discourse to create some sort of 'society of ecologist subjects'?

First it is necessary to say that for Badiou only the occurrence of an event propitiates

the uprising of a subject. The author takes a subject to be contingent and transient, and describes it like this: 'it is not substance, being, soul, a "thinking something" as Descartes says. It depends on a process, it begins and it ends' (Badiou 1994: 43). The French philosopher also affirms that a subject is the result of the production of some truth, and this truth is established by the event: 'The subject is not an origin. In particular, it is not that there is truth because a subject exists, but inversely there is a subject because a truth exists' (ibidem). But how would it be possible to occur an event with its truth and its subject? Lazarato says: 'Every invention is a rupture of norms, rules, and habits that define individuals and the society. An invention is an act which takes its actor out from historical time and brings him into that event's temporality' (Lazzarato 2006: 69). In the same way, Badiou indicates it is necessary to 'make a bet' (1994: 45), since no rule allows us to foresee the beginning of an event; and after this bet and the irruption of an event, we must keep faithful to it. According to Slavoj Žižek:

At first approach, an event is thus *the effect that seems to exceed its causes* – and the *space* of an event is that which opens up by the gap that separates an effect from its causes. Already with this approximate definition, we find ourselves at the very heart of philosophy, since causality is one of the basic problems philosophy deals with: are all things connected with causal links? Thus everything that exists have to be grounded in sufficient reasons or are there things that somehow happen out of nowhere? How, then, can philosophy help us to determine what an event – an occurrence not grounded in sufficient reasons – is and how it is possible? (Žižek 2014: 5)

Well, in the relation existing between man and Nature, the first has always been considered a specific case of the second; that is, man appears inscribed in a natural world which came before. But just as symbolic analysts start to talk about the *Anthropocene*, this relation is expected to be inverted: if mankind used to be a species among others in a chain of life succeeding along the eras - or in other words, a causal product of natural history - now it is Nature itself that becomes historical, and its modifications must be understood from the perspective of the evolution of human societies. The sign of our era should be from now on the mark of this subversion between culture (which has passed from content to container) and Nature (*vice versa*). Precisely this inversion would quite pertain to an event as Badiou describes it - an annulment of relations between cause and effect. The *Anthropocene* would/should be like Lacan's *d'après coup* or like Laclau and

Mouffe's *point de capiton*, something altering retroactively the conditions of its own production.

When we speak about an event, it means thus that it is not possible to foresee its beginning based on partial clues. It can only be done *a posteriori*, and a subject's position can only be established by looking back to the moment when the event was produced. In the case of ecologism there is also much divergence about the initial moment of ecological thought (from Teophrastus to Rachel Carson, for example). In our society of images and the spectacle, though, one moment seems to have been decisive for the massive diffusion of an idea, however vague, of ecologism: the moment when we were capable to take pictures of our whole Earth.

When environmental issues made their first dramatic leap to the top of the political agenda in the late 1960s, it was the global issue that really captured public attention. Not coincidentally, this was also the first time the Earth was photographed from space, and a beautiful, fragile place it looked. For the first time in human history the Earth could be conceptualized readily as a finite planet, and for the first time a true politics of planet Earth became conceivable. Environmental problems were soon cast in terms of threat to the capacity of this planet to support life – specially human life. (Dryzek 2005: 25)

Porto-Gonçalves describes that moment as follows, emphasizing his fixation in one image:

We were near the end of the 50's, and the Russian astronaut Yuri Gagarin saw Earth from space for the first time. 'The Earth is blue,' he said. [...] The Earth was blue, round and small when seen from his point of view! [...] Earth was a finite planet aloft in infinite space, [environmental] ideas from then on cease being just philosophical concepts to become IMAGE. And starting at that time, IMAGE would become ever more powerful. (Porto-Gonçalves 2011: 11)

The failed event in a perverse society

It 'would become ever more powerful', enough to 'live at the end of times', as we read in Žižek (2012), but not enough for us to leave our condition of biopolitical subjects of management, production and consumption, and become environmentalist subjects. If an

event is the emergence of a new master signifier (Žižek 2014: 121), a pictorial representation of our planet would then be candidate for the position of nodal point of an ecologic society. However, conditions posed for the emergence of subjects of an event (Badiou 1994: 109) indicate that there must be fidelity to the event's truth - only then the event itself would begin to be experienced.

There is no doubt that the media machine⁴ (Charaudeau 2006) has the environmental crisis as a relevant theme, and much beyond the political, scientific, academic and artistic classes (those we could call an elite), the meanings of this theme are broadcasted by pop culture. The theme of the environment is exposed in daylight in our society of the spectacle; it is not hidden inside some technical, bureaucratic or scientific pigeonhole, repressed by the hegemonic discourse of liberal-capitalism. On the contrary, it is obscenely exposed in Hollywood movies, advertisement, self-help manuals and in beautifully illustrated reports of corporative communication. But in this hyperexposure, in this colorful hypersemiosis, there is a symptom reversion (Žižek 2008). The environmental crisis is denegated (in Lacanian sense) and shows itself only through its positively painted reverse: in the hole once rendered visible, the discourse of sustainability inserts a plug. There, in the weakest spot of the structure, sustainability provides for strength; precisely there, where death could be glanced as a constitutive lack in the production-and-consumption system, an ideology emerges which refounds the semiotic regime of truth of liberal-capitalism.

The sustainability semiotic operation consists in the insertion of a high-tech equipment to plug the hole - gadgets which obstruct the view of the environmental crisis and propitiate a perverse *jouissance*. Sustainability (we could also call it 'reformist ecologism'⁵) lays its bets on new rounds of investment in cleaner technologies that can take the place of old ones. These economic strategies are naturalized and post-cyclic, from the perspective of liberal-capitalism, and their logic is the substitution of older products and processes by newer ones, in a competently managed manner. This is the case, for example, of the role played by electric cars in the automotive industry: they are an insignificant part of a huge and highly pollutant global industry, but they provoke the displacement of the meanings of the whole industry. Once they are shown before the old fashioned cars, the grey smoky present of this business field itself is replaced by the vision of a green and clean future.

Luc Ferry, an advocate of reformist environmentalism, says: 'It is more than probable that it shall be thanks to an exaggeration of science and technology that we'll be able some day to resolve the issues addressed by environmental ethics' (Ferry 2009: 218); and

he concludes a little further on: 'Reformism is not the form we should adjust ourselves to because there is nothing better, but rather it is the only attitude that can constitute an exit from the world of childhood' (idem: 232). In turn, John Elkington begins his book *Cannibals with Forks* (2001), one of the most influent works of reformist ecogism, as follows:

'Would it be a progress for a cannibal to use a fork?' asked Polish poet Stanislaw Lec. I do believe it would be, especially in the case of corporative capitalism and corporative cannibalism. [...] It will be necessary for us to maintain focus and direction in order to support this agenda along the unavoidable cycles of economic growth and recession, mergers and scissions of companies, public enthusiasm and disappointment, governments' activism and passivity. (Elkington 2001: XIX)

Matching the taste of corporative self-help manuals, the proposed idea in this case is the *win-win*, or the notion of a world where everybody wins. Giddens also celebrated the introduction of the 'sustainable development' concept, which according to him helped regulate the sayings of 'radicals', with the following words: 'The introduction of the concept had a valuable effect. [...] It provided a reliable intermediate field from where previously irritable, dreaming, radical people can make improvements to feasible measures' (Giddens 2010: 87).

What we have, in sum, is a proposal to enjoy the gadget away from political confusion, away from the 'social Inferno', as Latour (2004) says. In this way, a so-called 'ecological' product will deviate a fetishist's regard from a traumatic core to a partial object, as we mentioned before respecting the electric cars, whose are put upon the field of vision of an immense global industry manufacturing millions of irremediably pollutant units. Žižek has a passage where he explains the fetishist disavowing of ecogism in the following manner:

It is true that the typical fetishist disavowal of ecology is: 'I know it very well (we are all under threat), but I can't really believe it (and hence I'm not willing to do anything really important, like changing my way of life)'. But there is also the opposite form of disavowal: 'I know very well I cannot influence the process that may lead to my ruin (a volcanic eruption, for example), but accepting this is too traumatic for me, therefore I cannot resist the urge to do something, even if I know that ultimately it is no good'. Don't we purchase organic food for more or less the same reason? Who will actually believe those terribly expensive and half-rotten 'organic' apples are healthier than others? The question is, when we purchase them, we are not buying

and consuming just a product: we are doing at the same time something relevant, that is, we are demonstrating our capacity of global concern and awareness, and we are participating in a big common project. (Žižek 2012: 310)

A fetishist is precisely someone who maintained a belief (in the mother's phallus or the pre-castration entirety) *and* abandoned it: '[who] in the conflict between the burden of an undesired perception and the power of the opposite desire reached a compromise, which is only possible under the direction of one's unconscious mind's laws - of primary processes' (Freud 2014: 305). This is exactly the mechanism used to deal with the hole and transform that structural lack into an eventual source of *jouissance*. Dryzek says (with criticism): 'Sustainable development also involves a rhetoric of reassurance. We *can* have it all: economic growth, environmental conservation, social justice; and not just for the moment, but in perpetuity. No painful changes are necessary' (Dryzek 2005: 157).

Thus the circuit of this perverse structure is completed: the hole of the environmental crisis glanced in the act of consuming is denegated by added consumption, now a 'qualified' one. The pillar of this structure is the high-tech gadget which is always the same, but always a new one (just as capitalism is always changing to remain the same)⁶. In our society of spectacle and consumption the repressing Superego of modernity has given way to the Superego of enjoyment; this is the instance driving (im)pulse to consumption, before which a liberal-capitalist subject must affirm and reaffirm constant satisfaction (Prado 2013). Once the production-and-consumption engine is exactly what is propelling liberal-capitalism like an uncontrolled machine heading into complete destruction, the terror consists less in an accidental unbecomingness of individuals facing their Superego demands than in the fact that the signifying chain may collapse under its own weight, if its absurd and brutal lack of meaning is exposed. Put before this inextricable duplicity, between acknowledging the environmental crisis and preserving the Big Other's functionality, subjects of liberal-capitalism denegate the reality of death and the meaninglessness of the structure with a new round of consumption, now requalified by techno-ecologic semiotization.

This resignification follows the same logic of that made in relation with diet and light products, or low-sodium, gluten-free, lactose-free, trans-fat-free products. It is also the logic behind alcohol-free beer, electronic cigarettes, and, if we are to enter the field of 'social responsibility', behind 'politically correct' products manufactured without the use of child or slave labor, and so on; and even behind wars waged by drones and robots, where there is no visible blood and tears (Žižek 2003). This is the ultimate fantasy of a world

without any constitutive lack. Bill Gates himself has dreamed once of a 'friction-free capitalism' (apud Ercília 1997). Its power resides in a logic of fetishist appropriation of goods from which we expect a 'social relation'. My toothpaste, the tires of my car, my cell phone, my chocolate cookies, and most of all my half-rotten apples shall be ecologic in my place; they will be attentive invigilators, committed militants, competent politicians.

In short, it is as Žižek says (2012: 312, commenting Hawken): technology and management (and here we could also add *self care* in the sense given by Foucault) amplify commoditization *ad absurdum*, as a way to overcome this environmental crisis triggered by the production-and-consumption system itself. A human being of the *Anthropocene* tries to deal with the reality of death as glimpsed through the environmental crisis just as he also tries to deal with obesity, cholesterol, street violence etc; even though his diligences are of very little avail, following the logic that goes like 'they are well aware, but nevertheless they do this' (Žižek 1996: 316, commenting Sloterdijk).

Emphasis on politics

Up to here I was discussing that the organic, integrated response to the environmental crisis has a perverse structure. In order to go further we must 'open the box' of environmentalisms to observe that the currents disputing hegemony in that discursive field are plural. These currents may be defined as a reformist ecologism, a deep ecologism, and a radical ecologism⁷ (Prates 2013). In the previous segment of this article I examined the precepts of the reformist ecologism or sustainability, integrated into the production-and-consumption system and into global corporate values. Now let's examine briefly the premises of the two antagonist currents to reach a conclusion.

The *leitmotiv* of deep ecologism is a separation between civilization and Nature: to one side our instrumentary, productivist modern way of life; to the other side, natural spaces that indicate a sacred cosmic order. For worshipers of sylvan spaces, every fruit of Nature belongs in mystery and is beyond human understanding, and this is why they cannot be profaned. Thus, they cannot be quantified and brought to the 'crematist' order (Alier 2009), the managerial counting of wealth and debts. This is why deep environmentalism is opposed to the notion of environmental compensations in investments which may be harmful to Nature. It is interesting to observe how this separation is connected with a religious sense, at least according to Giorgio Agamben: 'We can define as religion that which subtracts things, places, animals or persons from common use and transfers them to a separate sphere. Not only there is no religion without separation, but

every separation contains or conserves in it a genuinely religious core' (Agamben 2007: 65).

Our time is, in accordance to deep environmentalism, the time when greet children threaten Mother Earth who must be kept safe and return to her place of rest, separated from the confusing social world, as a venerable (and vulnerable) goddess, so we can serenely lay down on her lap. Among strategies to deal with the environmental crisis, this is the 'worst of all', as Žižek (2015) says himself: it is to advocate the return to a natural equilibrium, a more traditional way of life for the sake of which we renounce to human *hubris*.

This dream of returning to an unharmed Nature is the expression of wishes of entirety and completeness; it is to fantasize a non-castrate Gaia Mother goddess. There is no doubt that in order to experience deep ecology we would have to deny the *Anthropocene* itself, as the premise of this last concept is not the return to a pre-industry paradise, but rather an inextricable identity of destinies of both: the production-and-consumption system and Nature. Deep ecologists usually share an alternative neohippie culture, with characteristic artistic and religious expressions. Žižek spots in New Age and in Buddhism (idem 2014: 58-59), in its Western and pop expression, this kind of retreat that simply leaves aside the confusions of the global liberal-capitalism; which at the end of the day amounts to nothing else than participating in the dynamics of the very hegemonic system.

This much said, what should be our bet to avoid the perverse structure which paralyzes the event with a promise of *jouissance*? The obvious answer is: a radical politicization, which is not by chance the name of the third current of ecologism. Let's go back to Žižek's premise (2011: 439): 'In truth, we need an ecology without Nature: the biggest obstacle to nature protection is the very notion of nature we take as a basis'. What it's all about here is to somehow traverse fantasy and acknowledge that the 'radicalness' of radical ecologism is that it proposes faithfully living the experience of an environmental truth, opened by the event. The reformist ecologism, much as it may reform, will not be - in its perverse structure - the *momentum* of creation of new subjects; while deep ecologism, much as it may go deep, will do so in a retreat toward the dream of Nature as a completeness that has never existed (and which must deny the *Anthropocene*).

In order to create the subjects of an ecologic event, what is needed is exactly to reaffirm the *Anthropocene* as the moment when the forces and actions properly human of politics are so coupled with forces of Nature that the former can supradetermine the latter. This amounts to refuse the 'spontaneous ideology' which commands consumption as a way to denegate the hole⁸. What Luc Ferry or Anthony Giddens propose, as we explained

above, is the very fantasy of an absolute liberal-capitalist power to which we must always return, but which is paradoxically giving proof of its impotence all the time. The problem with a perverse structure is, as clinical psychoanalysts know, that it is a source of fetishist enjoyment, and if we are to deal with the environmental crisis we must introduce it again in the rough political arena. If radical ecologists are accused of dreamy puerilism, we should reply that when those militants politicize the environmental crisis, what they are doing is exactly to take it back to a properly adult world.

The issue is neither about a reconciliation between capitalism and Nature (as reformists see it), nor even a reconciliation between Mother Earth and her children (as deep ecologists want it); it is about acknowledging that there never was any possible reconciliation, that the environmental crisis is a permanent field of conflicts without solution, which in fact would be a tragic approach to the constitutive lack (Perelson 1994). But is not a tragic regard the way we have to break a perverse structure, as we have known since Antigone?

Liberal capitalism is not self-cleaning through consumption; Nature is no phallic goddess. In the *Anthropocene* the crisis will not come to an end, and this is the reaffirmation of those who believe in politics as antagonism, those who understand that new meanings must follow the shift of consolidated discourses. And those who share this vision acknowledge that ecologist currents which fantasize about the completeness of Nature or the completeness of the production-and-consumption system do not have 'political radicalness', not at least to the point of laying a bet on an event which might bring into view a new category of environmentalist subjects.

Notes

1. The Anthropocene succeeds the Holocene which came after the Pleistocene, the Pliocene, the Miocene etc. within the Cenozoic era. Mesozoic and Paleozoic eras, farther earlier still, point out to the ground zero of life in our planet, in a regression going back to the Precambrian era.
2. Žižek (2015) published a short article named *Ecology against Mother Nature: Slavoj Žižek on Molecular Red*, where he commented the book *Molecular red: theory for the Anthropocene*, by McKenzie Wark (2015). Wark goes back to Marx's concept of rift in order to discuss the Anthropocene, and taking from there he visits a series of authors and their works up to the current post-human theories. Žižek says in his article that he agrees with Wark except for the so called 'shared life', a horizon beyond which the author of *Molecular Red* didn't advance, in his understanding. In this paper, otherwise, I take the concept of Anthropocene from Crutzen and his group, and do not attempt to adhere to the polemics just mentioned.
3. In Giddens for example: 'The politics of climate change has to deal with what I have named "the Giddens paradox": since the hazards represented by global warming are not palpable, immediate, nor visible, in our everyday life, even if they can be devised as frightening, a lot of people keep sitting doing nothing material about it. Nonetheless, if we wait until such hazards become visible and dramatic before we take serious measures, it will be too late, by definition'. (Giddens 2010: 20)
4. In which, in addition to mass media, we find an increasingly volume of 'corporative communication' stuff, produced by symbolic analysts working for global companies. They have found outlets for their discourse in websites, sophisticate sustainability reports, and in many other public relations releases – which try to influence their so-called 'stakeholders', and for which a vast technical literature about the 'sustainability' issue is made available (Prates 2008).

5. Reformist ecologism is one of the tendencies of ecologism that vie for hegemony in the environmentalist discursive field. We will briefly mention ahead the other tendencies, deep ecologism and radical ecologism. Please refer also to Guillaume (2002), Alier (2009) and Prates (2013).
6. Obviously the structure remains the same because the promise of pleasure made by the gadget is never completely met; it appeals to the libido, but in the end it only replicates the lack itself, as Lacan says (apud Žižek 2014: 56).
7. Notwithstanding other legitimate attempts to divide the currents, the advantage of this one is the division is based on the different notions about the causes for the environmental crisis to appear, so therefore about the event creating the subjects of ecologism.
8. Žižek says (1996: 15) this is a “spontaneous” ideology acting in the core of the very social “reality”. In other words, it is a non-argumentative, non-strategic form of ‘ideology’ (which for the author is its ‘level zero’), consisting in ‘(un)apprehending a discursive feature as an extradiscursive fact’ (idem: 16).

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