



Department of Political Science

Major in Politics, Philosophy and Economics

Chair of Bioethics

Acting for the good of others, or at least believing so

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Introduction

This paper will try to analyse and discuss the main tenants of Slavoj Žižek’s book “*First As Tragedy, Then As Farce*”, attempting to coherently correlate them to the rather fascinating world of Bioethics.

The Slovenian philosopher starts delineating a three-stage transformation of the spirit of capitalism, starting from the entrepreneurial spirit of the 1930’s to the corporate-managerial one, which ranged until the end of the 60s, in order to arrive to the modern “*Cultural Capitalism*”. A new version of the economic system characterized by the acquisition of commodities motivated, not by their intrinsic value, utility or status symbol, but via the experience of pleasure and meaningfulness derived by their consumption. For Žižek, this spirit has englobed the rhetoric of 1968 by becoming slightly more tolerant, more egalitarian and more prone to face ecological concerns. Yet, in order to survive, *Cultural Capitalism* changed its façade without altering the elements that produce inequalities which are, nevertheless, inherently endemic to the system. In drawing up the distinctions among the latest two phases, he heavily emphasises the mutation that the role of charity in the economy underwent, passing from isolated actions to a basic constituent of the system. He notes how in the second recognized type of capitalism, the consumerist act was devised in two well-delineated spheres: the act of buying something and the act of

giving back to society under different forms, normally through charity, what the individual had previously taken from it. Žižek claims that in *Cultural Capitalism* the tendency is increasingly that of dragging closer the two aforementioned dimensions for merging them into one. «So that when you buy something, your anti-consumerist duty to do something for others for environment and so on, is already included into it» (Žižek, 2009). In other words, when a commodity is purchased the redemption from being a consumerist is already included in the very act of buying.

Accordingly, *Cultural Capitalism* anesthetises the conscience of the people living under it by letting them believe to have made a good deed while they have merely perpetrated and nourished an inherently unequal system. Consequently, the actions taken for changing the unfairness of the system do not cure its endemic evils but solely prolong the actual state of affairs, thus becoming not a solution but a part of the disease.

Žižek's extraordinarily innovative intuition on the nature of *Cultural Capitalism*, finds its theoretical roots in the work of another rather fascinating thinker, namely Pierre Bourdieu. His concept of *Cultural Capital* revolves around the idea that if social capital is determined by the types of relationships that a person has with other fellow people and economic capital, as commonly understood, is based on the accumulation of general and financial assets, then *Cultural Capital* «refers to the collection of symbolic elements such as skills, tastes, posture, clothing, mannerisms, material belongings, credentials, etc. that one acquires through being part of a particular social class.» (Stempel, 2005). Therefore, according to the French Marxist sociologist, inequalities can be traced inside the different levels of *Cultural Capital* present in society, as better off people will be able to share among their selves, including their children, finer life's experiences just like they are able to grant more economic resources.

Having succinctly delineated the dissertation's theoretical framework, it is time to present its link to the world of Bioethics. Object of analysis will

be the actions of the pharmaceutical industries, known as *Big Pharma*. Particular attention will be cast to the process of patents' granting and renewal that, as it will be shown, yields almost unchallenged power to pharmaceutical companies in the price-setting decision of medicines.

All of the aforementioned arguments are parted in three precise chapters. The first one will entail a presentation of Slavoj Žižek's thoughts, offering also a background on his academic formation, with the intent of giving an all-encompassing display on the life and works of the Slovenian philosopher. A brief mention about Big Pharma's activities will be included. The second chapter will be devoted to the thorough analysis of *Cultural Capitalism*, including its connections to Bourdieu's theory of *Cultural Capital*. The third and final chapter will expose the correlation between Žižek's interpretations and the actions concerning Big Pharma's price-setting mechanism. In order to allow the reader to evaluate and understand the validity of the Slovenian thinker's analysis, his thoughts will be juxtaposed to the narration of a case study that will be taken as a point of reference: the most disastrous AIDS epidemic in history, faced by the Republic of South Africa, and the actions of pharmaceutical companies and other international actors for tackling this horrendous catastrophe.

1. An overview of Slavoj Žižek's charismatic figure: ideas to be discussed and biographical notes

1.1 Introduction

In this first chapter, the reasons that motivated the present dissertation's writing will be exposed. This will entail an analysis of the rather complex, multifaceted and charismatic figure of Slavoj Žižek, with the attempt of presenting the main features of his thought.

Starting from the presentation of the *Cultural Capital* theory, elaborated by the French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu, the topic of *Cultural Capitalism* and its interpretation by Žižek will be introduced without forgetting to mention some examples provided by the Slovenian thinker.

Lastly, the attention will shift on the world of Big Pharma, paying special focus on various, much criticized, actions carried out by pharmaceutical companies, which will be later addressed in detail in the third chapter.

The last two sections are dedicated to the biography of Slavoj Žižek, retracing the steps of his academic background.

1.2 Introduction to Žižek, why choosing him

Slavoj Žižek (1949) cannot be simply defined as a “psychoanalyst philosopher” deriving from the Hegelian tradition and believing in Marxist ideals. The Slovenian thinker’s profile can hardly be labelled under a clear-cut, precise professional figure. While reading his works, the first impression is that of facing a radical mastermind, however is the same thinker that labels himself as a «pragmatic pessimist» who hates «pseudo-radicalism», (Azzolini, 2013). Žižek possesses a vast culture, which enables him to blend his interests and elaborate his easily comprehensible theories with irony and competence. He is also defined as a “cultural critic”, or rather a contestator of a specific social system, following the example of Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), one of his philosophical reference point.

The object at the centre of Žižek’s critique is the western Capitalist system. Being not the first nor the last thinker hostile to Capitalism, it is his approach to render him particularly interesting. The abundance of anecdotes and quotes taken from literature and movies, present in his writings, earned him the nickname of «The Elvis of philosophy», (Azzolini, 2013). Leaving aside these witty remarks, Žižek remains a knowledgeable scholar who based his thought on three main pillars: Hegelian dialectics, Karl Marx’s critique of political economy and the psychoanalytic approach of Jacques Lacan.

As it will be show later in this chapter, by analysing his biography, Žižek is markedly far from being a nostalgic of the Soviet system. This ideological distance is underlined by the irony he often times uses when examining this topic. He believes that «the duty of an intellectual is to

understand a problem and radically describe it, without offering any cheap solutions to it», (Azzolini, 2013). The Slovenian thinker does not solely use psychology or/and philosophy for individuating, analysing and explaining a phenomenon but successfully draws from modern mass culture expressions, like movies, even authorial ones.

Žižek is firmly convinced that ideology has survived to all the transmutations of the last thirty years and albeit in a veiled way, it is still used and implemented. The goal of Hegelian dialectics, re-interpreted through Lacan's theories, is to unmask ideology and reach the real essence of things. As a matter of fact, starting from these aforementioned theories Žižek has dilated the concept of "Reality", initially understood as what is authentic, or rather the immutable truth in relation to both, interior dimension and external perception.¹ Using this method, the Slovenian philosopher is able to disclose the contradictions and pitfalls intrinsic to ideologies. Concerning the neoliberalist and Capitalistic system, Žižek denounces its inherent crisis whilst revealing its deceptions that have the sole intention of maintaining the system alive and helping it flourish. In doing so, he moves various critiques to the radical left, which he argues, sustains rather than fights Capitalism.

1 Žižek distinguishes three modes of "Reality":

1) The "Symbolic Reality" which can be fully understood by employing the use of metaphors. Žižek cites as an example the movie *The Matrix*, directed by Wachowski brothers, in 1999.

2) The "Imaginary Reality", a frightful aspect ascribable to the sense of terror usually felt while watching a horror movie. An example is *Flatliners* by Joel Schumacher, 1990.

3) The "Real Reality", something unfathomable, present in all the things as a trace of the sublime. Cinematographic references for this category are *The Full Monty*, by Peter Cattaneo, in 1997 and the musical *The Sound of Music*, by Richard Rodgers, 1959.

See Carver, T. and Martin, J. (2005), *Palgrave Advances in Continental Political Thought*, p. 314.

1.3 *Cultural Capitalism* from Bourdieu to Žižek, an introduction

Among Žižek's topics of analysis, *Cultural Capitalism* covers a significant role. This concept is correlated to that of *Cultural Capital*, which was firstly theorized by a French Marxist sociologist and anthropologist, Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002). As the title mentions, the former will be more profoundly analysed in the following chapter, leaving now the space and the possibilities to delineate *Cultural Capital*'s general traits.

Starting from the first years of the 60's, Bourdieu has systematically associated the notion of capital with every kind or type of existing resource. In particular, with the term *Cultural Capital* is intended the level of culture that each person is able to reach, which, Bourdieu calls *habitus*. The latter is not merely defined by the educational qualification obtained by the individual, but for the most part by the education he or she has received in the familiar milieu, at school or in other social contexts, as far as to include personal experiences. Hence, for the French sociologist, the *habitus* is strictly linked to the social class of belonging, since it is very often the group to which the individual appertains that limits or thrives the development of the person. In this manner, it is easy to understand how *Cultural Capital* becomes an index for possible personal success, and certainly, those who possess a greater economic capital could more easily increase the level of their cultural one.

In his book, *First As Tragedy, Then As Farce* (2009) Žižek unmistakably shows the hypocrisy of modern-days Capitalism, focusing especially on the shared tendency of multinational firms to devolve part of their profits to humanitarian initiatives, in order to link their brand to those type of actions. In fact, he claims that the goal of these programs is not that of helping the other for the sake of doing so but, instead, that of giving a new look to consumerism, making it appear as an increasingly acceptable and less egotistic phenomenon. For achieving their scope, corporations use

marketing and commercials, which according to the Slovenian thinker are nothing less than ideology, or rather «the ultimate form of consumerism», (Žižek, 2009).

In order to explain the above-written opinion Žižek uses in his work various examples, the most efficient and appealing ones are those of *Starbucks* and *Tom's Shoes*², which he considers as the perfect epitome of *Cultural Capitalism*. In the new perception of consumerism, people believe to have performed a good deed by adhering to the aforementioned initiatives, linked to the acquisition of a particular product. In reality, people's intention in complying with this sort of programs, is not that of improving the lives of more disadvantaged individuals, rather that of buying their «redemption from being only a consumerist» (Žižek, 2009).

1.4 *Cultural Capitalism and Big Pharma*

Rather than focusing on one of the peculiar examples furnished by Žižek, *Cultural Capitalism* will be here analysed in relation to the world of *Big Pharma*. The term is used for labelling the pharmaceutical industry, in its widest sense, including the different sectors of research and development, production, commercialization and marketing.

Throughout the years, a considerable number of scandals and polemics has struck pharmaceutical corporations. Activists and protesters have lamented, apart from its immorality and cruelty, about the misleading nature

2 Both companies highlight their humanitarian initiatives: according to Žižek, Starbucks justifies their overpriced coffee by claiming to help Guatemalan terriers offering them not only a fair trade but also devolving 1% of Starbucks' profits to children in Guatemala. On the contrary, Tom's Shoes declares that for each pair of Tom's shoes bought, the firm will donate a pair of their shoes to a person in the less advantaged part of the world.

of vivisection, which is often seen as an instrument needed to obtain the necessary authorization for the commercialization of a drug. Nevertheless, the most controversial aspect in the area of interest of the *Big Pharma* is the towering price of drugs

Big pharma continues to argue that it needs these profits to invest in R&D in order to come up with life-saving drugs. But, according to the WHO, the world's largest pharmaceutical companies typically boast profit margins of about 30% and spend twice as much on marketing, (*The Guardian*, 2015).

According to Steven Lukes, notwithstanding the restriction that should ensure the avoidance of economic, and less so, abuses, pharmaceutical companies have become as much influential as to be able to exercise «a third dimension of power », (Edgar, 2013).

In the third chapter of this dissertation, it will be show how the mechanism for the granting of patents helps *Big Pharma* in continuing exercising its almost monopolistic rule on drugs' price-setting. Moreover, a special focus will be conferred upon the examination of the correlation between Žižek's notion of *Cultural Capitalism* and the above-cited actions of pharmaceutical corporations.

1.5 Biographical notes. Žižek's formation in the former Yugoslavia

- 3 «Carcinogenicity tests, conducted in mice and rats sometimes provide conflicting results in the two species. Therefore, it is assumed that the human organism can exhibit different results, compared to the results presented by the organisms used during the experiments ... For this reason, the data extracted from animals, such as the risk assessment of carcinogenicity, are to be considered as indications very inaccurate. Only the observation of what is happening to a human being humans can provide reliable indications for the evaluation and prevention of human risk.» Curtoni, E. (1991), *Manuale di Genetica*, UTET.

Slavoj Žižek was born on 21st March 1949 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. His father was an economist and her mother an employee. He studied “Philosophy and Sociology” at the University of Ljubljana, where he was captured by the allure of German idealism. He particularly appreciated the

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thinkers of the Frankfurt School and the retelling of Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital* according to the Hegelian perspective reported in the

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Phenomenology of Spirit. Žižek joined the circle of the dissident intellectuals and published some articles in several periodicals, as he was greatly intolerant to the impositions from above and to the distortions of the

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political orthodoxy. In 1973, he graduated with a thesis of 400 pages entitled: *The theoretical and practical relevance of French Structuralism*, in which he blended some reflections of philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), psychoanalytical philosophers like Jacques Marie Émile Lacan (1901-1981), an anthropologist and philosopher such as Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009).

4 The philosophical and sociological School called “Frankfurt School” was born during the 20's of the last century. It was composed mainly by German philosophers and sociologists with Jewish origins sharing a neo-Marxist tendency. It is important to mention, among the most important components: Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund-Adorno (1903 – 1969), Max Horkheimer (Stuttgart, 14 February 1895 – Nuremberg 7 July 1973), Herbert Marcuse, (1898 – 1979), Leo Löwenthal (1900 – 1993), Jürgen Habermas (1929), Walter Bendix Schoenflies Benjamin (1892 – 1940).

5 Žižek was influenced by his professor Božidar Debenjak (1935), chair in Philosophy at the University of Ljubljana. Debenjak himself introduced the study of the Frankfurt School in Slovenia.

6 «The regime's paradox was that if people had taken seriously its ideology, this would have effectively destroyed the system...The common understanding was that Socialism was a failure because, instead of creating a “New Man”, it produced a country of cynics who believed that the system was corrupted, politics a horror and that only a private happiness was possible». Slavoj Žižek quoted by Boynton, R. (1998) *Enjoy Your Zizek! An Excitable Slovenian Philosopher Examines The Obscene Practices Of Everyday Life--Including His Own*. *Linguafranca*, Vol.8, No.7, October 1998.

In 1971, Žižek began to work at university as researcher assistant surrounded by the certainty of having a brilliant career ahead. However, an examination board denied the smartness of his analyses, judging his graduation thesis too Western-oriented and «not sufficiently Marxist». The commission preferred another candidate as graduate student, who was less skilled but better included in the system, thus more prone to be easily controlled .

Žižek absolved his military duties in Karlovac. For many years, he managed to support himself by translating from the original language the works of German philosophers. In 1977, thanks to the intercession of some of his ex-professors, the Central Committee of the Communist League of Slovenia entrusted him with the task of writing political discourses. The philosopher later confessed that he had fun hiding subversive messages inside those speeches. As the latter job was not too demanding and time-consuming, Žižek had the possibility to continue his researches and the writing of new articles.

In the meantime, he encountered some young colleagues, who were fascinated by the Lacan theories and the Surrealist movement . Together with Mladen Dolar, Alenka Zupanovic, Miran Bozovic and Renata Salecl, who then became his first wife, Žižek founded a newspaper, *Problems*, and a series of mono-graphical publications *Analecta*. The group of philosophers used to write provocative articles, which were often anonymous, or under a pseudonym. For giving an example, Žižek himself wrote, using a fictitious name, a firmly critical review of one of his works, performing then the role of the “obtuse moderator” in an imaginary debate on feminism with

7 «Slavoj was so charismatic and brilliant that they were afraid to allow him to teach at the university, they imagined in fact that he would have controlled the department of Philosophy and influenced the students.» Mladen Dolar quoted by Boynton, R. (1998).

8 Lacan himself was a friend of two of the maximum exponents of Surrealism: the poet André Breton (1896-1966) and the painter Salvador Dalí (1904-1989).

fantastic interlocutors.

His polemic spirit did not prevent him from being hired as a researcher at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Ljubljana, where he took part to a research project called *The role of the unconscious ghosts in the process of making the Slovenian identity*. Even in this case, he enjoyed a relatively high number of free time during which he focused on his researches, publishing several articles on specialised internationally recognised journals.

1.6 Biographical notes, Žižek's maturity and political commitment

When Žižek came back, from his studying in France, to Yugoslavia in 1986, he joined the opposition movement.⁹ He began to write for the *Mladina*, a journal hostile to the militarization of the Yugoslavian society. On October 1988, together with other 32 Slovenian intellectuals, he left the Communist Party as a form of protest against the so-called "Process of 4"¹⁰, that had led to the conviction of three journalists and a military officer, accused of publishing articles in which some military secrets of the Popular Slovenian Army had been revealed. Žižek straightaway joined the Committee for the Defence of Human rights that arose immediately after the four's detention. This newly formed association played an important role in society during the so-called "Slovenian Spring".

Žižek also took part in the creation of the Democratic Liberal Party. The new formation opposed both the communist system and the Right-wing Nationalism, supported feminism and environmental protection. In 1990,

9 Josip Broz (1892–1980), also known as Tito, founder and leader of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

10 Also known as "Process of Ljubljana", or "JBTZ Affair" ("afera JBTZ").

Žižek ran for the presidency of the Slovenian Republic, however failing to be elected. Two years later, his party won the governing elections.

The Slovenian philosopher has always tried to combine his political and social commitment with his activity as a thinker. In 1988, he wrote a book entirely focused on the cinematic art. This should be of no wonder, as he had always wanted to become a filmmaker since his early childhood. He used the Lacanian approach in order to interpret the works of famous directors like Alfred Hitchcock and David Lynch, as well as independent and commercial movies or science-fiction ones.

In 1989, he published his first book in English, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, offering an alternative view to the dichotomy between the French Post-modernist scepticism and Habermas rationalism. During the last twenty-seven years, he has written a considerable number of books, 40 of which have been translated in Italian. It is worth mentioning his numerous contributions on specialised scientific journals, political parties, international newspapers and magazines. In between 1996 and 2012¹¹, six documentaries as well as a large quantity of essays were filmed and written on Žižek. As a proof of his popularity there is a journal entirely focused on him, *the International Journal of Žižek Studies*.

Notwithstanding his opposition against the Yugoslavian Communist Party during the 80's, Žižek never abandoned his communist ideology. In 2008 he auto-defined himself as a "communist in a qualified sense" and a "left-wing radical". Even today, he is a critic of classic liberalism, reactionary conservatism and of all forms of nationalism. Coming back to

11 *Liebe Dein Symptom wie Dich selbst!*, directed by Claudia Willke Katharina Höcker, in 1996; *The Reality of the Virtual*, directed by Ben Wright, in 2004; *Žižek!*, directed by Astra Taylor, in 2005; *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, directed by Sophie Fiennes, in 2006; *Alien, Marx & co.*, directed by Susan Chales de Beaulieu, Martin Pieper (ARTE/ZDF) and Michael Schmidt (BR), in 2006; *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, directed by Sophie Fiennes, in 2012. Žižek is also one of the philosophers, who were interviewed in the amusing documentary *Marx Reloaded*, directed by Jason Barker, in 2011.

present days, Žižek is still a researcher at the Institute of Sociology and Philosophy of the University of Ljubljana. At the same time, he is the director of the Birbeck Institute of Humanities at the University of London, Global Distinguished Professor of German at the New York University, professor in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis at the European Graduate School and lastly he has been appointed as Eminent Scholar at the Kyung Hee University in Seoul.

1.7 Conclusions

The first chapter presented the complex personality of the Slovenian thinker Slavoj Žižek, focusing on the highlights of his thought. The notion of *Cultural Capital*, elaborated by the French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu, was briefly outlined as to precede with the analysis of what Žižek calls *Cultural Capitalism*, hinting at a pair of case studies, including the controversies linked to pharmaceutical companies' behaviours. Finally, a biographical background was offered by delineating Slavoj Žižek's academic path comprehending his studies in Slovenia, his passion for philosophy, sociology and psychiatry as well as his return to Yugoslavia, after his French parenthesis, where he participated in the democratic rebirth and independence process of his country.

2. Cultural Capitalism and the notion of charity

2.1 Introduction

This second chapter will be dedicated to the in-depth analysis of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of *Cultural Capital*, therefore facilitating the finding of points of contact with Žižek's interpretation of *Cultural Capitalism*.

Following the same logical reasoning, attention will be drawn on some of the most interesting and original case studies that the Slovenian philosopher has chosen in order to favour the understanding of his theory. Lastly, the chapter will address Žižek's innovative position on the phenomenon of *charity* and its relevance in Western society, highlighting the effects it has on the less advantaged countries of the world.

2.2 Pierre Bourdieu and the theory of *Cultural Capital*

Cultural capital has been rightly described (Lareau and Weininger 2003, 568) as one of Bourdieu's "signature concepts." [...] Bourdieu's wish to speak of cultural capital, rather than of cultural values and resources, is clearly more than a matter of mere terminological preference (Goldthorpe 2007, 1, 4).

Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) was born in Denguin, France, in 1930. His father, a farmer that later became a post office worker, pushed him to

study, regarding the latter as the best way to be successful in life. Once accepted at the *École Normale Supérieure* of Paris, Pierre Bourdieu became the pupil of the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser. He started to teach in Algeri, meanwhile taking advantage of his stoppage in Africa to study the Kabili ethnic group and write his first essays on Algeria and its inhabitants. Bourdieu later became director of the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* in Paris and finally Professor of Sociology at the *College de France*.

Bourdieu was a prolific and committed intellectual, hostile to globalization and to neoliberal economic policies. Inspired by Marx, Bourdieu identified in the capital the basis of social life, but he explored this insight even further. If the economic capital consists in the material wealth,

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the social one is based on the relationships with other people . *Cultural Capital*, instead, includes elements such as knowledge, personal skills and

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individual behaviour .

«Culture, taste, good manners, art of conversation, the ability to

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distinguish Bach from ditties» , these are the abilities received from the family and the environment in which a person lives and to which a person appertains, creating or reinforcing his or her sense of belonging to a specific

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social group .

12 «The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group.» (Bourdieu 1986 I, 51).

13 «Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital refers to the collection of symbolic elements such as skills, tastes, posture, clothing, mannerisms, material belongings, credentials, etc. that one acquires through being part of a particular social class.» (Stempel, 2005).

14 *Corriere della sera*, (2001), “Le classi secondo Bourdieu”, editoriale, 21 agosto 2001.

15 «Sharing similar forms of cultural capital with others — the same taste in movies, for example, or a degree from an Ivy League School — creates a sense of collective

Bourdieu first introduced the concept of *Cultural Capital* in 1964, in an essay entitled *Les héritiers*, written together with his disciple Jean-Claude

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Passeron (1930). In 1967, Don Lorenzo Milani (1923-1967) faced similar arguments. Just like Bourdieu, Milani spotted inside the different levels of *Cultural Capital* a form of social disparity (Milani, 1996). The wealthier families facilitate the lives of their own children because they are «able to transmit experiences and superior knowledges, just like they transmit superior economic resources» (Brint, 1999, 220).

Cultural Capital is then, at least partially, determined by economic wealth, but it does not need particular financial resources in order to be exploited. In fact, the possession of cultural capital provides capabilities – both tangible and intangible – that demonstrate the competence of a single person, thus resulting fundamental in the determination of his or her social

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mobility level .

According to Bourdieu, we can find *Cultural Capital* in three different forms:

in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of

identity and group position (“people like us”» (Stempel, 2005).

16 Pierre Bourdieu further developed his concepts in his later works: *La reproduction. Eléments pour une théorie du système d'enseignement*, Minuit, Paris, 1970, that he wrote, again, together with Passeron; *Economic Capital, Cultural Capital, Social Capital*. *Soziale Welt*, 2, 1983; *The Forms of Capital*, from *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. Richardson, New York, 1986.

17 Furthermore, «It cannot be accumulated beyond the appropriating capacities of an individual agent; it declines and dies with his bearer [...] Because it is thus linked in numerous ways to the person in his biological singularity and is subject to a hereditary transmission which is always heavily disguised, or even invisible.» (Bourdieu 1986 I, 49.)

theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee. (Bourdieu 1986 I, 47).¹⁸

2.3 From *Cultural Capital* to *Cultural Capitalism*

Dominant classes always want to preserve their supremacy, ensuring the reproduction of unequal circulation of economic, social and cultural capital. One measure, for so doing, is deciding what should be taught in schools and universities, in order to favour the diffusion of the *Cultural Capital* that best serves their purposes. (Cf. Bourdieu 1973, 80-2)

Being a conservative apparatus, the educational system would prevent any transformation, keeping unchanged the social positions of families across generations.¹⁹ (Cf. Goldthorpe 2007, 11).

In every historical epoch, the regimes have had their critics and opponents, which are bearers of values that are contrary to those who support the dominant ideology. The dichotomy between the capitalist and the communist system has not been resolved, as theorized by Francis Fukuyama (1952), by «the advent of a global liberal community» (Žižek 2009, 3). In addition to the appearance of new competitors on a global scale (China, Arab countries) and the return to prominence of the old ones

18 «One's accent or dialect is an example of embodied cultural capital, while a luxury car or record collection are examples of cultural capital in its objectified state. In its institutionalized form, cultural capital refers to credentials and qualifications such as degrees or titles that symbolize cultural competence and authority.» (Bourdieu 1983).

19 «For Bourdieu, it is the combination of institutional control over forms of capital together with processes of conversion and transmission that is crucial to the capacity of dominant classes to maintain their position.» (Goldthorpe 2007, 8).

(Russia), the liberal Capitalist system must face asymmetric challenges, such as terrorism, anti-globalization protesters and environmental movements. The increasing diffusion of technologies and mass media encourages the spread of counterculture. Some of these are the product of a *cultural capital* that emphasizes environmental protection, respect of human and civil rights, peacekeeping and the refusal of labour exploitation.

Dissidents are often accused to draw inspiration from the ideologies in a period where all ideologies are supposed to be extinguished. As we have seen in the first chapter, Žižek firmly believes that ideology is not dead. Not surprisingly, he entitled *It's Ideology, Stupid!* The first chapter of his 2009 book: *First As Tragedy, Then As Farce*.²⁰

Žižek attributes to the economist Guy Sorman (1944) the elaboration of «the clinically pure, laboratory-distilled version of contemporary capitalist ideology» (Žižek 2009, 19). This new typology chooses not to frontally confront his inner protesters, but to use a new strategy, in order to assimilate them. It acts on consumers' motivations, trying to influence life habits, behaviour and decisions related to their consumption²¹ preferences. Slavoj Žižek dubs this new ideology *Cultural Capitalism*.

2.4 Žižek's idea of *Cultural Capitalism*

20 We choose to place only a few quotations in which Žižek openly speaks about the ideology. «When the normal run of things is traumatically interrupted, the field is then opened up for a "discursive" ideological competition. [...] Perhaps then the economic meltdown will also be used as a "shock"; creating the ideological conditions for further liberal therapy?» (Žižek 2009, 14, 19).

21 «The differentiation of consumer motivations therefore reflect the changes in class formation in the sense that social divisions derive not so much from the unequal distribution of industrial goods as from that of cultural goods.» Cf. Yoshio Sugimoto (2010).

Researcher Maria Thaemar Camanag Tana defines *Cultural Capitalism* as:

The application of capitalist theory in cultural affairs. It is defined as the production of symbols, knowledge, and information as the guiding principle of wealth creation. It is distinguished from industrial capitalism in the sense that it focuses on cultural attractions and activities as the primary motivating factors underpinning consumption, (Camanag Tana 2015, 1).²²

The Slovenian thinker unmasks and denounces what he considers the capitalist ideology's deception. To influence consumer motivations, *Cultural Capitalism* uses the weapons that knows best: trade, sale, advertising, or rather selling lifestyles.²³

The starting point of Žižek's reflections is 1968. A crucial year, passed in history as characterized by the shared willingness of, especially, young people to change the world and its institutions like school, families' dynamics and workplace. In the time that followed, the ruling or dominant class engendered new policies in those sectors that were hit by these powerful protests. Žižek emphasizes the difference between rights conquered and permissions accorded by those in power: only the rights entail a «true redistribution of power» (Žižek 2009, 59). On the contrary, the latter recall the *Carte Octroyées* that an absolute monarch autonomously decides to grant to his own subjects.²⁴ The achievement of a law on divorce,

22 Economist Jeremy Rifkin (1945), defines Cultural Capitalism as «the commodification of human culture itself.» (Rifkin 2000).

23 According to researcher Maria Thaemar Camanag Tana «Commerce has now become the primary institution, and culture, coopted and commercialized, is derivative. The key players in this new type of capitalism are transnational media companies that exploit cultural resources and re-package them as cultural commodities.» (Camanag Tana 2015).

24 Žižek expressly quotes philosopher and linguist Jean Claude Milner: «Those who hold power know very well the difference between a right and a permission. [...] A right in a strict sense of the term gives access to the exercise of a power, at the expense of another power. A permission doesn't diminish the power of the one who gives it; it

abortion, gay marriage, right to vote then appears as a mere permission disguised as a right, cf. Žižek (2009, 59).

Deprived of the chance to win a decisive victory, the Left found itself overwhelmed by an emergent *Postmodern Capitalism*, that took possession of the same social areas which were previously the exclusive competence of the Left. Cf. Žižek (2009, 144). Today, according to Žižek, «ecology turns into a problem of sustainable development,²⁵ intellectual property into a complex legal challenge, biogenetics into an ethical issue» (Žižek 2009, 98). Capitalism thus deceives people, offering them the illusion of choice²⁶.

2.5 Cultural Capitalism's case studies presented by the Slovenian philosopher

Before 1968, a dichotomy between ethics and consumption was present. Žižek observes, in contemporary capitalism, a tendency to undo that dichotomy, so to reconcile the drive to buy and consume with the harangues of conscience.²⁷ Žižek identifies the new spirit of this *Cultural Capitalism* in the ability to make people buy things «neither on account of their utility nor as status symbols; we buy them to get the experience provided by them, we

doesn't augment the power of the one who gets it. It makes his life easier, which is not nothing.» (Milner 1965, 233).

25 Ecology is only a recent issue, the first environmental science book is Rachel Carson *Silent Spring*, published in 1962. Rachel Carson revealed the damages caused by the use of pesticides, corruption of supervisory bodies and malicious misinformation.

26 «Liberal economists emphasize freedom of choice as the key ingredient of the market economy. [...] In the "Marxist" version of this theme, the multiplicity of choices with which the market bombards us only serves to obfuscate the absence of any really radical choice concerning the fundamental structure of our society.» (Žižek 2009, 62-63).

27 «So that when you buy something it is your anti-consumerist duty to do something for others for environment and so on, is already included into it.» (Žižek 2009 II, 2).

consume them in order to render our lives pleasurable and meaningful» (Žižek 2009, 52).

The first case study chosen by the Slovenian thinker is the American coffee company and coffeehouse chain Starbucks Corporation. Žižek considers Starbucks ad campaign «an exemplary case of *cultural capitalism*». (Žižek 2009, 53). In fact, they do not merely list the qualities of their product; they promote what they call, in pompous way, the Starbucks Shared Planet Program:

we purchase more Fair Trade coffee than any company in the world, ensuring that the farmers who grow the beans receive a fair price for their hard work. And, we invest in and improve coffee-growing practices and communities around the globe. (Žižek 2009, 53).

Žižek interprets Starbucks' expression «good coffee karma» as a «"coffee ethic" which includes care for the environment, social responsibility towards the producers» (Žižek 2009, 53). The old consumerism-ethic dichotomy is thus decomposed and re-created under a new perspective: as the company claims that its trade is fair, the conscience of the consumer is pleased for he or she believes that by buying this type of coffee, he or she is actually performing a good deed. Therefore, there is no need of practically doing something good for the others if the sensation of having carried out a good action for another person is already included in the consumeristic act of buying a cup of coffee. Starbucks is «a company that cares. [...] when you buy Starbucks, you're buying into something bigger than a cup of coffee», (Žižek 2009, 53) you are buying your own redemption.²⁸

28 Žižek also describes the Starbucks "Ethos Water" program: «a brand with a social mission-helping children around the world get clean water and raising awareness of the World Water Crisis [...] These programs will help an estimated 420,000 people gain

Another interesting example regards the American company Toms Shoes, «the most “absurd example” of cultural capitalism» (Suechting 2012). Toms Shoes, declare that by buying a pair of its shoes, Toms will give a pair of its to a poor farmer in Africa. Hence, for Žižek, the act of purchasing produces an almost immediate effect as consumers «feel morally and ethically satisfied while doing it because they have fulfilled their “ethical duties” of charity, kindness» (Suechting 2012). The idea that a pair of shoes will be donated to a person makes more effect, probably than that, of a few cents - subtracted from the price of a coffee - that will end up in a fund designed to finance a social project. Moreover, continuing with other instances «Nike “sells” the culture of physical achievement with its slogan “Just Do It”» (Camagan Tana 2015), North Face’s motto is “never stop exploring” and Hilton Hotels claim «Travel doesn't only get us from place A to place B. It should also make us a better person». (Žižek 2009, 54).

Žižek is also skeptical about organic food.

Who really believes that half-rotten and overpriced "organic" apples are really healthier than the non-organic varieties? The point is that, in buying them, we are not merely buying and consuming, we are simultaneously doing something meaningful, showing our capacity for care and our global awareness, participating in a collective project. (Žižek 2009, 54).

2.6 The “short-circuit” of the emotional process

These above presented case studies possess one common element: people accept to buy something in order to achieve the sense of gratification in believing to have done something positive for the environment or for

access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education.» (Žižek 2009, 54).

starving people, rather than empirically doing so. Žižek calls this action – the act of buying – a «semantic over investment or burden» (Žižek 2009 II), echoing Rudyard Kipling *White Man's Burden*. (Cf. Žižek 2009, 114-118).

Faced with difficult situation such as injustice, human beings often react with an emotional response. Donate money is one of these responses. According to Žižek, *Cultural Capitalism* takes advantage of this sensitive side of people as «it “short-circuits” the emotional process by including the charitable act in the price of the consumerist act» (Suechting 2012). It offers people a chance of redemption and, at the same time, it finds ways to preserve its business, showing itself as «the utmost radical horizon of our imagination [...] global capitalism with a human face». (Žižek 2012, II).

However, the “short-circuit” of the emotional process does not provide an effective progress or improvement of the situations that *Cultural Capitalism* claims to ameliorate. The much-publicized actions of companies, such as offering a pair of shoes, or donating a portion of profits, are in reality, types of palliatives, rather than efficient programs intended to seriously tackle the aforementioned problems. Linking up to the topic of the third paragraph, the social actions of the companies look more like a concession – a *Carte Octroyées* - rather than an acquired right.

Notwithstanding all that has been written, and even worse, *Cultural Capitalism* actions are harmful, because they merely offer temporary relieves, masked as permanent solutions, to complex phenomenon such as poverty, instead of fighting the real deep roots of social inequality. This is the paradox of charitable attitude. Aside from not solving the problem, charity makes those who practice it satisfied, and at peace with their conscience. At a superficial glance, the behaviour of the industrialized nations appears ethically correct and they can «continue to exploit the cheap labour and products of undeveloped third-world countries» (Suechting 2012).

However, Žižek's analysis goes far beyond the superficial surface.

2.7 The notion of *charity*

In order to explain in a clearer way his ideas on charity, Žižek quotes a sentence of the famous writer Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), extrapolated from the essay *The Soul of Modern Man Under Socialism* (1891): «It is much more easy to have sympathy with suffering than it is to have sympathy with thought».

The misfortunes that affect humanity - such as poverty and starvation - have the natural and inevitable effect of touching people, triggering an emotional response. Empathy renders humankind's nature incline to attempt to remedy these adversities, following noble and generous impulses. Unfortunately, the same feelings prevent the achievement of the desired result. In fact, as it has been shown, feelings can and are easily manipulated and directed by the ideology of *Cultural Capitalism*.²⁹

As Žižek asserts:

the remedies do not cure the disease they merely prolong it; indeed the remedies are part of the disease. They try to solve the problem of poverty, for instance, by keeping the poor alive. Or in the case of a very advanced school by amusing the poor. But this is not a solution it is an aggravation of the difficulty. (Žižek 2009 II).

According to Žižek, palliatives are useless; the only decisive action is the one that tackles the problem at its root, with the specific intention of

29 «The worst slave owners were those who were kind to their slaves and so prevented the core of the system being realized by those who suffered from it, and understood by those who contemplated it.» (Žižek 2009 II).

solving it. If you really want to eliminate poverty from the world, the only possible way is to «reconstruct society on such a basis that poverty will be impossible and the altruistic virtues have really prevented the carrying out of this aim» (Žižek 2009 II).

As stated above, «altruistic virtues» are triggered by sentiments. Returning to Oscar Wilde's sentence, instead of following impulses and feelings, people must appeal to reason, as only through the use of thought one can understand the nature of things and avoid being deceived. However of great help, it would be naïve to believe that the reconstruction of society could start simply by ameliorating people's critical analysis abilities. Constructive thinking helps finding the best way to address existing problems and consequently anticipate future ones. Expanding Žižek's considerations, Suetching asserts:

it is important to realize that thinking is, in itself, an action. Too often, when confronted with inequality and injustice, blind, immediate action is applauded, while thinking is condemned as cold, calculating or unfeeling. But it is blind action, not thinking, that is the problem here. (Suetching 2012).

Žižek's opinion on the practice of charity is quite clear: «Charity degrades and demoralizes. It is immoral to use private property in order to alleviate the horrible evils that result from the institution of private property» (Žižek 2012, II). Obviously, the Slovenian philosopher is not wholly contrary to charity.³⁰ He vigorously criticizes the hypocrisy hidden behind *Cultural Capitalism's* charitable gesture, exemplified in «repairing with the right hand what he ruined with the left hand» (Žižek 2012, II).

30 «I'm not against charity. My god in an abstract sense of course it's better than nothing» (Žižek 2012, II).

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter portrayed the topic of *Cultural Capitalism*, starting from Pierre Bourdieu theory of *Cultural Capital*. After, Žižek and his theory on capitalist ideology's changes over the past fifty years was analysed, focusing on his interesting and original case studies: Starbucks and Tom Shoes. Finally, attention was given to the Slovenian philosopher's position on charity and the solution he proposed: the use of critical thinking and constructive rationality as opposed to the impulsiveness of the feelings.

The next and last chapter will resume and deepen the topic of *Big Pharma*. In particular, it will retrace what happened in the Republic of South Africa at the end of last century, hence reconnecting with various ideas proposed by Žižek.

3. Case study analysis under the light casted by Slavoj Žižek: Big Pharma v South Africa

3.1 A brief summary of the previous chapters and the presentation of the final one

As read until now, the first chapter rotated around the figure of Slavoj Žižek, an eclectic thinker, philosopher, psychoanalyst, scholar of today's society and critic of the Capitalist system. The topic of *Big Pharma* was then introduced, followed by the mentioning of various critiques that were moved throughout the years to the pharmaceutical system.

In the second chapter, space was given for the illustration of the theory of *Cultural Capital*, delineated by the French thinker Pierre Bourdieu, demonstrating how the concepts of *Culture Capital* and *Culture Capitalism* share more than just a mere phonic assonance. According to Žižek, *Cultural Capitalism* is the most fitting expression of Capitalist ideology, being therefore functional to the capitalist liberal system survival and promotion. In order to render the understanding of cultural capitalism as straightforward and clear as possible, various case studies, drawn from Žižek's work were analysed. Lastly, the focus was shifted on the concept of *charity*, taking into considerations the Slovenian thinker's viewpoints.

As anticipated, this chapter will deal with various aspects associated to Big Pharma's universe. In particular, special attention will hinge on the different problems related to the granting of patents and their use for the production of drugs, necessary to treat particularly contagious diseases, such as AIDS. The aim of the case study will be to allow us to understand

whether Žižek's ideas can be considered valid.

3.2 Big Pharma

Big Pharma is the term used to indicate and by which it is known, for better or worse, the pharmaceutical industry.³¹ Its task is that of discovering, developing, producing, and distributing medicines that are necessary to cure diseases.

Especially in recent decades, *Big Pharma* has been the subject of much criticism, targeting both the ethics and the professionalism of its work. In 2012, British physician and writer, Ben Michael Goldacre (1974) published: *Bad Pharma: How Drug Companies Misperceive Doctors and Harm Patients*. His work strongly criticizes the actions of the pharmaceutical industry.³² Being very well documented, Goldacre's book has received positive reviews from major newspapers, but was unilaterally and firmly criticized by the representatives of the pharmaceutical companies, particularly from the ABPI British.

According to American scholar Robert Blaskiewicz, a conspiracy theory believes that Big Pharma is a «shorthand for an abstract entity comprised of corporations, regulators, NGOs, politicians, and often physicians, all with a finger in the trillion-dollar prescription pharmaceutical

31 The most famous and rich pharmaceutical companies are Pfizer, Merck & Co., Johnson & Johnson, Bristol-Myers-Squibb, Amgen, Abbott Laboratories, Baxter International, Procter & Gamble (USA), Novartis (Switzerland), Bayer AG, Boehringer Ingelheim (Germany), GlaxoSmithKline (United Kingdom).

32 «We like to imagine that medicine is based on evidence, and the results of fair tests. In reality, those tests are often profoundly flawed. We like to imagine that doctors are familiar with the research literature, when in reality much of it is hidden from them by drug companies. We like to imagine that doctors are well-educated, when in reality much of their education is funded by industry. We like to imagine that regulators only let effective drugs onto the market, when in reality they approve hopeless drugs, with data on side effects casually withheld from doctors and patients.» (Goldacre, 2012).

pie» (Blaskiewicz 2013).

The first chapter of this thesis mentioned the criticism regarding to experiments on humans and animals, in particular vivisection, introducing the problem of the cost of drugs. As it easy to infer, the cost of drugs, as anticipated, is more than strongly influenced by the possession of patents.

3.3 The AIDS epidemic, the measures taken by South Africa, the first responses of the United States and Big Pharma's actions

The case study that will be analysed concerns the granting of patents in the case of an epidemic and in particular, it will deal with the treatment available for fighting AIDS.³³

From 1994, the Republic of South Africa is facing the most disastrous AIDS epidemic in history.³⁴

The Minister of Health took the position that both the shortage of prescription drugs in the public sector and the exceptionally high prices in the private sector were the result of the pricing strategies adopted by multinational pharmaceutical companies who held patents in South Africa on most antiretroviral drugs. (Fisher

33 «In September 1986, early clinical tests showed that Azidothymidine (AZT), a drug first synthesized in 1964 to be used as chemotherapy for leukemia, slowed down the progress of the disease. In 1987, AZT (Zidovudine, Retrovir®) became the first anti-HIV drug to be approved by the FDA [Food and Drug Administration].» (Fisher III 2005, 1).

34 « South Africa rapidly became the country with the highest absolute number of people living with HIV/AIDS. The overall adult prevalence rate approached the twenty percent mark, and approximately forty-five percent of military personnel were infected with HIV.» (Fisher, 2005, 3). The simple contamination was aggravated by the spread of an absurd and criminal practice, suggested by shamans: sex with a virgin would have cured men. It is estimated that every year, at least 500,000 women are raped in South Africa, especially girls, and in some deplorable cases (about 10%), even children. Cf. BBC (1999), Itano (2003), *Irinnews* (2009).

2005).

To this declaration, drug companies replied that lower prices would be of no avail, as South Africa did not hold adequate health-care infrastructures. In 1997, the government finally decided to buy drugs at a lower price. A law was passed allowing the purchase of generic drugs from India and Thailand, or rather from two of those countries that were not subject to patent laws.

Fearing that other countries would have follow the example of South Africa as well as for avoiding a domino effect, which would have penalized their revenues, pharmaceutical companies started to pressure the American government. Bill Clinton's administration decided to support them, sharing the view that the law of the Republic of South Africa breached the international trade and patent agreements.³⁵ In particular, U.S. Vice President Al Gore (1948) carried a strong diplomatic pressure on the African state institutions.³⁶ In 1998, after an investigation of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), the U.S. government put South Africa on the *Special 301 watch list*.

3.4 The legal dispute between the pharmaceutical companies and South Africa

Feeling more confident, thanks to US support, 40 pharmaceutical companies

35 In detail: the right of importation prescribed by Article 28 of the *Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights* (TRIPS) was signed in Uruguay in 1994.

36 «"To me, [then-Vice President] Al Gore never in his life bucked corporate interest. He hasn't shown any character by bucking big money," said James Love». (Shawna 2002). James Love assisted the South African Health authorities in 1997 and supported resistance to foreign pressure.

decided to frontally attack the government of South Africa, and the popular African political leader, and Nobel Prize winner, Nelson Mandela. In February 1998, they turned to the High Court of South Africa, in order to challenge the constitutionality of the law that disadvantaged them.

South Africa took the position that the issue of parallel imports is a matter left to the individual WTO Member State to decide. Most countries and commentators agree with South Africa that Article 6 TRIPS is based on a country-by-country approach to the exhaustion of intellectual property rights and parallel imports. (Fisher 2005, 11).

According to the American economist, researcher and activist James Packard Love (1950),

as far as developing countries are concerned, pharmaceutical companies callously value profits above human life, pricing anti-retrovirals and other medications far out of reach while doing everything in their power to ensure that other labs are not permitted to manufacture and sell the drugs at lower cost. (Shawna 2002).

On the other hand, pharmaceutical companies declared not to be able to lower the prices of their products, as they claimed that otherwise revenues would have not paid back the extremely high costs in research and development, incurred for producing medicines. For the same reason, they declare to be contrary to give patents on their discoveries and inventions occurred in the laboratory, as «Patents are the lifeblood of our industry. Compulsory licensing and parallel imports expropriate our patent rights» (Fisher 2005, 5).

A somewhat significant number of economists confirmed the thesis of Big Pharma's spokespersons, indulging, on some occasions, to

catastrophic predictions.³⁷ Other defenders inserted in their arguments the discourse of solidarity and charity.

Parallel importation of drugs would undermine the ability of pharmaceutical companies to charge different prices in different parts of the world [...] tiered pricing strategy allows wealthier countries to subsidize poorer ones, and the drug companies still get profits they need for research. (Fisher 2005, 5).

In spite of what *Big Pharma*'s supporters state, the sale of drugs is not the main source of revenue for the big pharmaceutical industries, in fact, «U.S. government has spent billions of public dollars on the research and development of AIDS drugs, contributing to the development of most of those on the market today.» (Shawna 2002). Furthermore, as Dylan Gray remarked on *The Guardian*, this situation has remained practically unchanged up to contemporary days:

84% of worldwide funding for drug discovery research comes from government and public sources, against just 12% from pharma companies, which on average spend 19 times more on marketing than they do on basic research. (Gray 2015).

Some of the same beneficiaries of research funds have declared to support the position of South Africa, in particular, many students and professors from Yale University.³⁸ What were, then, the true reasons that

37 «Without present profits, the stream of future drugs dries up, plain and simple. The only assets drugs companies have are their patents, which ensure this revenue stream» (Kane 2001).

38 «It was at Yale that d4T, the main component in the popular anti-retroviral Zerit, was developed. Although Yale, a non-profit organization, received millions of dollars in royalties for its role in formulating Zerit, some members of the university's community felt its distributor's actions in South Africa were unacceptable.» (Shawna 2002).

lead the pharmaceutical industry's actions?

One fear is that South Africa's law might set a precedent for policies in wealthier countries, such as the United States, Canada, and European nations, where the industry makes most of its profits. Another is that drugs sold at reduced cost in the Third World will find their way back to markets in North America and Europe, re-imported through the so-called "gray market" as a way to save money. (Shawna, 2002).

Big Pharma thus showed to incarnate the selfish and profiteer side of capitalism. It speaks about revenues and profit, while millions of people - 4.7, considering only South Africa - were and are dying for lack of care. It is not surprising that public opinion has sided with South Africa, as it has been diplomatically threatened by world's greatest superpower (i.e. United States), and legally attacked by the world's richest companies.

George Mobiot wrote on *The Guardian*:

South Africa is now the epicentre of the global Aids quake [...] The international community has been quick to respond to this catastrophe: the United States has threatened South Africa with sanctions for trying to prevent its citizens from catching the disease (Mobiot 1999).

3.5 The withdrawal of *Big Pharma*

During the U.S. 2000 Presidential campaign, Vice President Al Gore, the Democratic presidential candidate, suffered heavy criticism. Activists accused him of protecting the interests of the pharmaceutical companies; the

recurring slogan was «Gore's greed kill».³⁹

The independent candidate, the ecologist Ralph Nader (1934), stated that Gore was implicated in «an astonishing array of bullying tactics to prevent South Africa from implementing policies, legal under international trade rules, that are designed to expand access to HIV/AIDS drugs.» (Nader 1999).

In June 1999, urged by James E. Clyburn - the Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus - Al Gore admitted, for the first time, the possibility to stand on the side of South Africa in the fight against AIDS. President Bill Clinton did the rest, ensuring that the United States would facilitate the access to drugs to poorest countries.⁴⁰

The Bush administration, which entered into office on January 2001, followed Clinton's policies lines concerning the South African case.

After losing the political support of the United States, drug companies were forced to back down. In April 2001, Big Pharma companies «dropped their suit, claiming they were willing to work with the South African government to develop affordable solutions to its drug shortages» (Shawna 2002). They also accepted to pay all South African government's legal expenses.

On July 7, 2000, the German pharmaceutical manufacturer Boehringer

39 « Vice President Al Gore is doing drug company dirty work,» the group AIDS Drugs
for Africa says in fliers distributed at Gore's appearances.» Babcock and Connolly
(1999). «On Sunday they interrupted a campaign speech at a New Hampshire
fundraising picnic, chanting: Gore's greed kills.» Borger (1999).

40 On May 10, 2000, he formally ordered that the United States shall not seek, through
negotiation or otherwise, the revocation or revision of any intellectual property law or
policy of a beneficiary sub-Saharan African country [...] that regulates HIV/AIDS
pharmaceuticals or medical technologies" and prohibited the U.S. Government from
taking action pursuant to Section 301 with respect to laws or policies that promote
access to HIV/AIDS pharmaceuticals or medical technologies» (Fisher 2005, 9).

Ingelheim announced free distribution of a product known as Viramune®⁴¹ for a period of five years, in developing countries. South Africa government proclaimed that it would have provide that drug only in in a small number of health care establishments, because distribution costs were too high.⁴² Such a decision, and the subsequent doubts expressed about the real effectiveness of the drug in question, raised several controversies. However, after South Africa, also Kenya received free supplies of Viramune® by Boehringer Ingelheim.⁴³

Despite the setback of the pharmaceutical companies, American economist, researcher and activist James Packard Love was skeptical. In an interview in June 2001, he stated that he was

unimpressed by the fact that pharmaceutical companies, pressured by public opinion and media coverage, have taken positive steps to make AIDS drugs cheaper and easier to get. In almost every case, as he points out, they are simply dropping prices or just giving the pills away rather than granting licenses for local manufacture. And he doesn't believe that corporate largess alone will be enough to stave off one of the worst epidemics in human history, (Lindsey, 2001).

The dispute between the U.S. government and Bayer, the famous German pharmaceutical company, seems to confirm the thesis of James Love. In 2001, in order to fight the spread of the anthrax bacterium, President Bush wanted to use Bayer's patent to produce low-cost antibiotics. «He explained that this action was justified by a provision in World Trade

41 The scientific name is Nevirapine, it's a non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of AIDS. Cf. Presse Portal (2000), Young (2001).

42 Confirming what was claimed by the same pharmaceutical companies in 1997.

43 Cf. Young (2001), Kaiser health News-KHN (2002).

Organization (WTO) guidelines that allows governments to override patents in times of national emergency» (Shawna 2002).

Bayer accepted to provide its own antibiotic – Cipro – at a lower cost, thereby saving the confidentiality of its patent. Nonetheless, in November, Bush administration changed the rules of the WTO, as he made possible to obtain a patent in case of a serious health emergency

To many, this about-face was an instance of the United States putting its own and corporate interests above those of poorer countries. The answer to why fewer than 20 anthrax infections in the United States constitutes an emergency, while millions of HIV-infected South Africans does not, appears simple to many: power. (Shawna 2002).

3.6 The true causes of the problems in the less advantaged parts of the World

The scourge of AIDS has not yet been eradicated. South Africa remains the country with the highest spread of the virus and the highest mortality. Even today, many people do not receive treatment.

The South African experience brought the potential tension between patent protection for pharmaceuticals and public health concerns to the forefront of public awareness and triggered a global debate about what should be allowed and what should be prohibited under TRIPS in order to preserve the incentives for investments in research and development of pharmaceuticals, while still allowing countries the flexibility to respond to public health crises as they deem fit, (Fisher 2005, 14).

In the last years, Big Pharma and the U.S. administration tried to shift the attention on the need for prevention. While he was Secretary of State, General Colin Powell (1937) stated: «We don't want to lose focus on prevention [...] The great humanitarian necessity is to get the young generation to protect themselves» (Shawna 2002).

However, the whole question seems to be much more complicated than how it is has been presented. African States inherited their health care system from European colonizers. During the 1960s and 1970s, many local governments spent large sums of money, in order to improve the public health system.⁴⁴ The economic crisis of the 1980s pushed the African states into the arms of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and their heavy loan conditions. Governments thus «lost the control over their domestic spending priorities» (Colgan 2002). In the 1980s and 1990s, the poverty level grew in African countries. The lack of investment in health and other social services rendered the population vulnerable to disease and especially to epidemics. The issue of debt relief for African states emerged at the very end of the last millennium.

Insensitive to the humanitarian emergency, the World Bank continued to issue directives that responded to free market laws, imposing the privatization of the health sector. Health ceased to be a right of each person, to become the privilege of the few who could afford it, reinforcing economic and social inequality. The fragmentation of the health system also hampered the response to epidemics.⁴⁵

Occasional increases in funds to tackle AIDS, or the lowering of prices

44 The Declaration of Alma Ata (1978) stated that any single government should promote health of its citizens.

45 «When infectious diseases constitute the greatest challenge to health in Africa, public health services are essential. Private health care cannot make the necessary interventions at the community level. Private care is less effective at prevention, and is less able to cope with epidemic situations. Successfully responding to the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases in Africa requires strong public health care services.» (Colgan 2002).

proposed by Boehringer Ingelheim in 2000, and most recently by AZ in 2015,⁴⁶ do not solve any problems. It is «disingenuous for such creditors to proclaim concern with poverty reduction when they continue to drain desperately needed resources from the poorest countries» (Colgan 2002). According to many observers, «such mechanisms still look more like philanthropy than core business strategy» (Smedley 2015).

3.7 A conclusion that brings us back to the solution proposed by Žižek

The topic of philanthropy is closely linked to that of charity that was addressed in the second chapter. At the same time, a sentence of Slavoj Žižek looks particularly suitable to comment the case study of South Africa, analysed in this chapter: «the remedies do not cure the disease, they merely prolong it; indeed the remedies are part of the disease. They try to solve the problem of poverty, for instance, by keeping the poor alive». (Žižek 2009 II).

This study reveals that poverty - combined with lack of proper institutions and misinformation - is one of the main causes of the spread of epidemic diseases. Needless to mention that these diseases lead to the death of millions of people. Occasional remedies, emergency measures do not solve problems, they could, at the most, alleviate the symptoms or postpone a dramatic deterioration.

The solution proposed by Žižek seems more relevant than ever, even with respect to the case study of South Africa. In order to solve global problems, it is necessary to act at the roots of these same problems. It is fundamental to use the use of thought, or «sympathy with thought» for

46 Cf. Smedley (2015).

quoting Oscar Wilde. Thought must be constructive, it should be aimed at the resolution for each present problem and, possibly, to the anticipation of future troubles.

The use of charity, under the Cultural Capitalism's perspective has palliative effects as it helps to keep a sick system alive. In addition, it allows those who enjoy the benefits of this system to mask their real essence. However, Žižek is able with admirable critical analysis to unmask the hypocrisy of the so-called capitalism with a human face.

Accused of being a misanthrope, Žižek replied «You know very well that there is a certain type of misanthropy which is much better as a social attitude than this cheap charitable optimism» (Žižek 2009 II).

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Executive Summary

Oggetto di questa dissertazione è il pensiero di Slavoj Žižek, in particolare la sua critica del Cultural Capitalism e l'applicazione di tale critica a un preciso caso studio: la controversia sui brevetti dei farmaci per i malati di AIDS in Sudafrica.

1.1 Slavoj Žižek, brevi cenni biografici

Slavoj Žižek è uno psicologo e filosofo di orientamento marxista e scuola hegeliana, aperto contestatore del sistema liberale-capitalistico occidentale. Le sue opere rivelano una personalità complessa, è un pensatore eclettico con un'ampia cultura. Nutre infatti una passione per il cinema, in particolare quello d'autore, ma nei suoi saggi cita film di ogni periodo e genere. Ama molto anche la letteratura, la musica e l'arte.

Žižek è nato il ventuno marzo 1949 a Ljubljana, in Slovenia. Ha studiato filosofia e sociologia all'università di Ljubljana, apprezzando l'idealismo tedesco, i filosofi della Scuola di Francoforte e la rilettura de *Il Capitale* di Karl Marx secondo la prospettiva hegeliana della *Fenomenologia dello Spirito*. Ha lavorato come ricercatore universitario e scritto articoli su varie riviste specializzate, laureandosi nel 1973. L'argomento della sua tesi, *La rilevanza teoretica e pratica dello*

Strutturalismo francese, è stata però giudicata troppo filo-occidentale e “non sufficientemente marxista”, precludendogli momentaneamente il proseguimento della carriera accademica.

Dopo essersi mantenuto effettuando traduzioni dal tedesco, Žižek ha scritto discorsi politici per i membri del Partito Comunista Jugoslavo.

Ha poi scoperto il pensiero del filosofo e psichiatra francese Jacques Lacan (1901-1981). Uno spirito goliardico e polemico ha caratterizzato gli articoli di Žižek sulla rivista *Problemi*, fondata insieme a degli amici.

In seguito è tornato a fare il ricercatore, stavolta all'Istituto di Sociologia dell'Università di Ljubljana. Il progetto cui lavorava con altri colleghi, “*il ruolo dei fantasmi inconsci nel processo di formazione dell'identità slovena*”, gli lasciava tempo libero a sufficienza per dedicarsi ai propri studi e pubblicare articoli su varie riviste.

Dopo aver ottenuto il dottorato, Žižek ha trascorso la prima metà degli anni Ottanta a Parigi. Ha seguito un corso su Lacan tenuto dallo psicanalista Jacques-Alain Miller (1944), tradotto opere filosofiche e romanzi gialli e conseguito il suo secondo dottorato nel 1986.

Tornato in Jugoslavia ha dato il suo contributo all'opposizione che ha portato alla caduta del regime. È entrato nel Comitato per la Difesa dei Diritti Umani, ha partecipato alla creazione del Partito Liberale Democratico, candidandosi anche alla presidenza della Repubblica Slovena.

A partire dal 1989 ha pubblicato diversi libri e articoli in inglese, spaziando dalla filosofia alla psichiatria, dal cinema alla sociologia. Gli sono stati dedicati saggi, documentari e anche una rivista specializzata. Attualmente ricopre diversi incarichi accademici, non solo a Ljubljana, ma anche a Londra, New York, Seoul.

1.2 Il pensiero di Slavoj Žižek

Da un punto di vista dottrinale, i suoi punti fermi sono tre: la dialettica hegeliana, la critica dell'economia politica di Karl Marx e l'approccio psicanalitico di Jacques Lacan.

La sua critica del capitalismo non lo rende un nostalgico del sistema sovietico. Egli si autodefinisce “un comunista in senso qualificato” e un “radicale di sinistra”. Ritiene che le ideologie non siano morte e anzi continuino a esercitare la loro influenza. Utilizzando la dialettica hegeliana secondo gli insegnamenti di Lacan, Žižek afferma di poter riconoscere le motivazioni e gli effetti dell'ideologia.

In particolare, ritiene che il sistema capitalista sia in crisi, ma riesca a sopravvivere grazie alla mancanza di una decisa azione critica da parte della sinistra radicale. In questo lavoro particolare attenzione è stata posta sulla sua critica al *Cultural Capitalism*.

1.3 Pierre Bourdieu e il *Cultural Capital* o *Capitale Culturale*

Prima di analizzare il concetto di *Cultural Capitalism* è importante introdurre, per una maggiore chiarezza, quello di *Cultural Capital*, teorizzato dal filosofo francese Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002). Partendo dalle posizioni di Karl Marx, Bourdieu ha individuato nel capitale la base della vita sociale, distinguendo il capitale economico – la ricchezza materiale – da quello sociale – le relazioni interpersonali – e da quello culturale. Il capitale culturale ha connotati individuali, comprende la conoscenza, le capacità personali e il comportamento che una persona sviluppa in seguito al contatto con la famiglia e l'ambiente in cui vive. Queste qualità e capacità sono alla base della mobilità sociale.

Essendo determinato anche dalla ricchezza economica, il capitale culturale è però causa di disuguaglianza sociale, perché le famiglie più agiate possono garantire ai propri componenti maggiori risorse. Il carattere conservatore del sistema educativo tende a favorire le classi dominanti, impedendo l'ascesa di coloro che partono in una posizione socio-economica svantaggiata.

1.4 Žižek e il *Cultural Capitalism*

Il modello uscito vincitore dalla Guerra Fredda, quello capitalistico, non domina incontrastato. Oltre ai tanti oppositori esterni, sono presenti anche contestatori interni: ecologisti, pacifisti, no global e così via. In particolare, il pensatore sloveno si sofferma sull'evoluzione dell'ideologia capitalista, che invece di fronteggiare i suoi critici, per poter continuare a sopravvivere ha deciso di assimilarli, dando vita al *Cultural Capitalism*.

Il *Cultural Capitalism* è stato definito

l'applicazione della teoria capitalistica in ambito culturale. È la produzione di simboli, conoscenza e informazioni come principio guida della creazione di ricchezza. Si distingue dal capitalismo industriale nel senso che esso si concentra sulle attrazioni e attività culturali come i principali fattori motivanti alla base del consumo. Camanag Tana (2015, 1).

Il *Cultural Capitalism* influenza le motivazioni dei consumatori arrivando a vendere modelli e stili di vita.

Secondo Žižek, il punto di svolta sono gli anni successivi al 1968. Di fronte ai movimenti che chiedevano un cambiamento radicale della società,

la classe dominante ha promosso delle riforme. In realtà secondo Žižek, invece di riconoscere dei diritti pieni e reali, ha effettuato delle concessioni. Sotto questa luce devono essere difatti essere lette le varie riforme di quell'epoca come le leggi sul divorzio, l'aborto, i matrimoni gay e così via.

In questo modo, il Capitalismo ha negato alla Sinistra una vittoria decisiva, per poi usurpare il posto da essa occupato in alcuni ambiti da sempre storicamente appartenuti alla Sinistra, proprio per questo Žižek ritiene che oggi, «l'ecologia è divenuta un problema di sviluppo sostenibile, la proprietà intellettuale un complesso scambio legale, la biogenetica un argomento etico.» Žižek (2009, 98).

Secondo il pensatore Sloveno il *Cultural Capitalism* mette a tacere la coscienza del consumatore, eliminando i suoi sensi di colpa attraverso l'acquisto di beni.

1.5 Il *Cultural Capitalism* in due esempi presentati da Žižek

Nel suo saggio *First As Tragedy, Then As Farce*, (2009), Žižek presenta diversi casi di analisi per meglio spiegare la sua teoria.

Il primo è quello della catena Starbucks, che definisce «un caso esemplare di *Cultural Capitalism*.» Žižek (2009, 53). La compagnia fa molta pubblicità al suo Starbucks *Shared Planet Program*. Afferma di non sfruttare nessuno e di pagare prezzi equi ai fornitori di caffè. Per questo motivo, «quando acquisti da Starbucks, stai comprando qualcosa di più grande di una tazza di caffè.» Žižek (2009, 53).

Il caso studio della compagnia statunitense Toms Shoes rappresenta invece «” l'esempio più assurdo” di *Cultural Capitalism*.» Suetching (2012). Per ogni paio di scarpe che riesce a vendere, la compagnia promette di regalare un paio di scarpe ad un africano in gravi difficoltà economiche. In

questo modo, i consumatori «si sentono moralmente ed eticamente soddisfatti, perché hanno compiuto i loro “doveri etici” di carità e gentilezza» Suetching (2012).

Žižek esprime i suoi dubbi anche sulla effettiva genuinità dei prodotti biologici. Ritiene che molti li acquistino per sentire di aver fatto il proprio dovere nei confronti della collettività, semplicemente comprandole. O per meglio dire, l’acquisto di prodotti biologici è semplicemente motivato dal senso di gratificazione, provato dal compratore, nell’atto di scegliere un prodotto organico piuttosto che la solita banale merce.

1.6 Gli effetti del *Cultural Capitalism*

Il *Cultural Capitalism* fa quindi leva sui sentimenti delle persone, in pratica «esso “corto-circuita” i processi emozionali includendo l'atto caritatevole, la beneficenza, nel prezzo dell'atto consumistico» Suetching (2012). Tale atto, però, non migliora la situazione reale delle persone. Donare un paio di scarpe o parte dei ricavi a chi è in difficoltà non è un rimedio ai mali del mondo. È piuttosto un palliativo, così come la concessione di alcune riforme – divorzio, aborto – dopo il 1968 non coincise con la conquista di veri e propri diritti.

Secondo Žižek, gli effetti del *Cultural Capitalism* sono addirittura deleteri. Le iniziative proposte, infatti, si limitano a contenere la povertà, invece di risolvere il problema alla radice. Peggio ancora, chi compie piccoli atti fini a sé stessi – comprare mele biologiche o un caffè da Starbucks – si sente poi in pace con la propria coscienza, ritenendo di aver compiuto il suo gesto quotidiano di solidarietà, o la buona azione per preservare l'ambiente. Gli stessi artefici delle ingiustizie vengono addirittura considerati dei

benefattori, quando in realtà «riparano con la mano destra ciò che hanno distrutto con la sinistra» Žižek (2012 II).

1.7 Il paradosso della beneficenza

Questo tipo di beneficenza è degradante e demoralizzante. È questo il paradosso che Žižek affronta citando una frase di Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) tratta dal saggio *The Soul Of Modern Man Under Socialism* (1891). «È molto più facile essere empatici nei confronti della sofferenza che nei confronti del pensiero.»

Di fronte alle sofferenze dell'umanità, spesso vengono alla luce gli impulsi più nobili e generosi. Gli stessi impulsi che però impediscono la risoluzione dei problemi. Secondo Žižek non si elimina la povertà tenendo in vita i poveri, bisogna risolvere alla radice il problema. Bisogna «ricostruire la società su basi tali che la povertà non possa più esistere» Žižek (2009 II).

Tale approccio non deve basarsi sui sentimenti, per quanto nobili essi possano essere, ma sulla ragione, quindi, riallacciandoci a Oscar Wilde, facendo ricorso al pensiero critico. Un organico piano d'azione, ispirato da un'analisi razionale, porta infatti risultati migliori di una reazione impulsiva e quindi cieca.

1.8 *Big Pharma* e la controversia sulla concessione dei brevetti in Sudafrica

Il caso di analisi scelto riguarda la controversia sui brevetti dei farmaci per i malati di AIDS, tra le grandi aziende farmaceutiche che li producono e il governo del Sudafrica costretto a fronteggiare un'emergenza sanitaria. Le industrie farmaceutiche, chiamate anche *Big Pharma*, scoprono, sviluppano e distribuiscono medicine per la cura delle malattie. Sono continuamente criticate per gli esperimenti su esseri umani e animali, ma anche per la ricerca del profitto che troppo spesso penalizza chi non può permettersi di curarsi. I prodotti di *Big Pharma* sono infatti protetti dai brevetti che concedono ai colossi farmaceutici il monopolio della distribuzione in molti paesi – tra cui il Sudafrica - e, ovviamente, la scelta dei prezzi da applicare.

Nel 1994 il Sudafrica fu colpito dalla più devastante epidemia di AIDS della storia. Per i milioni di persone contagiate, le medicine costavano troppo, ma le compagnie farmaceutiche non abbassarono i prezzi. Nel 1997 il parlamento sudafricano approvò una legge che permetteva di acquistare i medicinali dall'India e dalla Thailandia, paesi che non rispettavano le norme sui brevetti.

Sollecitata dalle case farmaceutiche, l'amministrazione statunitense accusò il Sudafrica di violare gli accordi internazionali sui brevetti che aveva sottoscritto in precedenza. Il vicepresidente USA Al Gore esercitò una forte pressione diplomatica, arrivando a minacciare sanzioni economiche.

Nel febbraio del 1998, quaranta case farmaceutiche citarono in giudizio il governo sudafricano presso l'Alta Corte del Sudafrica, chiedendo l'abrogazione della legge contestata. *Big Pharma* temeva che i paesi industrializzati, seguendo l'esempio del Sudafrica, adottassero simili misure di natura *sociale-assistenziale*, sottraendole la maggior parte dei ricavi.

1.9 Le motivazioni a confronto, la risposta dell'opinione pubblica e il passo indietro dei *Big Pharma*

Secondo *Big Pharma*, gli alti prezzi dei medicinali erano determinati e giustificati dalle spese sostenute per la ricerca e lo sviluppo di quelle stesse cure. Allo stesso modo, l'esclusività garantita dai brevetti, oltre a garantire ai produttori un equo ricavo, avrebbe permesso di finanziare attività benefiche a favore dei paesi più poveri.

In realtà, l'84% dell'attività di ricerca è finanziata dai governi nazionali. Sono quindi i soldi pubblici a garantire la creazione delle medicine, mentre le case farmaceutiche intascano la maggior parte dei proventi.

Mentre milioni di persone rischiavano di morire perché private delle cure necessarie, le compagnie farmaceutiche continuavano la loro battaglia nel nome del profitto. L'opinione pubblica si schierò dalla parte dei meno fortunati. Negli Stati Uniti, Al Gore fu fortemente criticato in concomitanza con le elezioni presidenziali del 2000. L'amministrazione Clinton fece allora un passo indietro, schierandosi a fianco del Sudafrica contro le case farmaceutiche.

Nel 2001, *Big Pharma* ritirò le accuse e si dichiarò disponibile a collaborare con il governo del Sudafrica per debellare la piaga dell'Aids. La soluzione scelta fu quella di fornire gratuitamente medicinali per un numero prestabilito di anni, seguendo l'esempio della casa farmaceutica tedesca Boehringer Ingelheim a partire dal 2000. Dal punto di vista dei ricavi, *Big Pharma* ha preferito regalare dei prodotti piuttosto che rinunciare ai diritti sui brevetti.

1.10 La reale portata del problema e il ritorno a Žižek

L'emergenza sanitaria nel continente africano è però un problema complesso, che non si può risolvere con generose elargizioni. Tra gli anni Sessanta e Settanta molti governi africani, da poco usciti dalla decolonizzazione, avevano investito nel sistema sanitario pubblico. La crisi economica degli anni Ottanta li rese però schiavi della Banca Mondiale e del Fondo Monetario Internazionale, strutture che rispondono a criteri aziendalistici finalizzati al profitto. La privatizzazione forzata della sanità pubblica ha fatto sì che la salute divenisse il privilegio dei pochi che possono permettersi di pagare le costose cure. L'aumento della povertà e la frammentazione dei sistemi sanitari ha favorito la diffusione di malattie ed epidemie. Risulta chiaro che le iniziative filantropiche – più o meno disinteressate – non possono porre rimedio alla situazione venutasi a creare.

A questo proposito, il pensiero di Žižek sembra quanto mai pertinente. Regalare delle medicine, devolvere in beneficenza una percentuale dei ricavi, sono delle iniziative che ricordano quelle adottate da Starbucks e Tom Shoes. «I rimedi non curano la malattia, lo prolungano e basta. Cercano di risolvere il problema della povertà tenendo in vita il povero.» Žižek (2009 II).

Tali misure intaccano solo la superficie, Žižek suggerisce invece di andare alle radici del male, con l'intento di estirparle. Per ottenere lo scopo bisogna usare la ragione, recuperare l'empatia con il pensiero, come scriveva Oscar Wilde. Solo un'analisi accurata può garantire l'elaborazione di una soluzione ai problemi attuali e all'anticipazione di quelli futuri.

La beneficenza rimane invece un semplice palliativo, quando addirittura non crea l'illusione di un capitalismo dal volto umano. Quell'illusione è, secondo Žižek, il pericolo più grande, perché agendo sulle emozioni delle persone le distoglie dai veri obiettivi che esse vorrebbero perseguire. È contro gli inganni e le ipocrisie che Žižek combatte, nella

speranza che ogni persona impari a usare in modo costruttivo la propria razionalità.