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## Slavoj Žižek Remixed: “I consider this a total misreading of my position”

Joel Katelnikoff, University of Alberta, Canada

### Abstract

This essay is a cut-up / remix / montage of the work of Slavoj Žižek. It is a recombination of materials from his critical publications, including *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), *For They Know Not What They Do* (1991), *The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (2000), *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (2002), *The Parallax View* (2006), *In Defense of Lost Causes* (2008), *First As Tragedy, Then As Farce* (2009), *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism* (2014), and *Trouble in Paradise: From the End of History to the End of Capitalism* (2015). The section headers are all direct quotations from Žižek’s texts, as are the individual sentences in the essay’s first section. All other sentences are splicings-together of syntactic fragments from his texts. This essay is part of *A Recombinant Theory Project*. Micro-reports from this project are regularly published on Twitter: @remixtheory.

Our everyday existence is a series of struggles, hidden and open, violent and suppressed, conscious and unconscious. We thus get a multitude of meanings which do not form a harmonious whole, but just coexist side by side. How are we to deal with this gap? Is it possible to overcome it? Strict analysis leads to only one possible answer: never.

What does this repulsive ghost really want of me? Is he not claiming that he can dominate the signifying effects of this text? What is wrong with this criticism? Is it that a belief emerges in order to compensate for the failure of knowledge? We are thus all caught in a kind of ethical illusion, parallel to perceptual illusions. Is, however, this really the case?

At first sight, what we have here is a simple symmetrical inversion of the so-called normal, ordinary perspective. This fact says more than it intends. Freedom is not a blissfully neutral state of harmony and balance, but the very violent act which disturbs this balance. The problem is how, exactly, to do this. As a purely mechanical response?

To find our way in this mess, we have to break out of our ideological constraints – but how? Truth articulates itself through displacements. But someone will have to take a risk and do it. The paradox, then, is that the process of searching itself produces the object which causes it. We should not be afraid to pursue this line of reasoning to its conclusion.

**“we should formulate things in a very precise way”**

Let us begin with an apparently clear choice: we are in the very heart of our present point of view. Its basic underlying thesis determines our reality. Every signifying representation is the world, our perception of it. Its basic underlying

thesis forever resists its symbolic rewriting. How, then, are we to articulate our unfreedom?

Isn't the text simply finite and, as such, inadequate? Every signifying representation is a superficial interpretation. The world, our perception of it, reduced to philosophical reflection. A proper foundation in knowledge reduced to philosophical reflection. How are we to read these meanings and projects? How are we to enter the symbolic order?

Sometimes the correct thing to do is distorted by our present point of view. For this reason, our knowledge is reduced to philosophical reflection. Persons and things observe the world around me. Every signifying representation separates the word from itself. The source of totalitarianism is a signifier which fills this gap.

We are more than ever embedded in an apparently clear choice. Sometimes the correct thing to do should be clear. We all know very well that reality is disclosed to us. We know very well that there is a crack in its very heart. How, then, are we to break out of this stupid and meaningless inertia of being?

**“in a way, one can understand the authorities”**

We should love this world, even its consecutive Mondays in the winter semester. No longer able to identify with the machine of a religious ritual, we engage in a formulaic session of religious superstitions. This resort to politeness is deprived of any ideological justification. Sometimes the correct thing to do is identify with this misperception.

When I call someone “my teacher,” I introduce a minimum of conceptual order. This resort to politeness is provisional and temporary. We are in the very heart of the machine of a religious ritual, interrupted again and again by privileges the

system offers us. The ultimate abstraction of our mind cannot be both intelligent and honest.

When I call someone “my teacher,” I thereby perceive an object. When I refer to a thing as “chair,” I “mediate” the heterogeneous. We all know very well that network of machines and activities, the incessant capitalist drive to call someone “my teacher.” Bureaucracy is not all-powerful, but more powerful than the human brain.

The more we obey the Law, the more we are lazy ordinary people. How are we to deal with lazy ordinary people? Let us begin with consecutive Mondays in the winter semester. This resort to politeness as a rule turns into a nightmare. Sometimes the correct thing to do is empty and vulgar. Sometimes the correct thing to do is purely mechanical.

**“at its most radical, theory is the theory of a failed practice”**

We are more than ever embedded in closed academic debates, closed academic debates standing for a “real” transcendence. We are in the very heart of the privileges the system offers us. Our self-satisfaction is here very precise: we, the academic Left, want philosophical symposia. We are in the very heart of a decaffeinated revolution.

Capitalism and liberal democracy no longer believe in ideological truth. They no longer “believe” in the gap between content and form, perceiving themselves as free from the endless field of the signified. What the sensitive liberals want is somebody responsible for all the mess. How, then, are we to evoke the fear floating in the room?

What the sensitive liberals want makes the situation even more humiliating: illusion at its purest, the illusion of the revolutionary perspective. We are in the very heart

of gaps and repressions in the public discourse. Is it possible to overcome the symbolic machine, while we cannot gain full mastery over the privileges the system offers us?

We are producing the symbolic privileges the system offers us. We all know very well that we are in the very heart of the problem, because we lack the very language to be ready to risk everything. This resort to politeness is democratic or totalitarian. Sometimes the correct thing to do must be effected by revolutionary means.

**“he then goes on to evoke the fear floating in the room”**

Let us begin here with an incomprehensible loss through which we perceive the world, an endless universe sustaining our ecology of fear. Because we lack the very language to survive this violent act of being. The abyss of inexistence in which we experience ourselves. The drama of self-identification flowing out of the self-inflicted wound.

The self-inflicted wound is here very precise. We are in the very heart of a fragment, an incomplete phrase, sliding toward the abyss of poetic repetition, interrupted again and again by the urgency to intervene. Writing is totally failures and false pretensions. Writing is totally installing anguish and despair.

These lines seem to offer their useless, inert presence. To experience meanings, we have to cause a catastrophic imbalance. How, then, are we to generate a monster with a life of its own? How are we to read these failures and false pretensions? Any failure can be a means of facilitating human thinking. One should emphasize the warm red blood.

We are in the very heart of the human brain, our present point of view flowing out of the self-inflicted wound, an endless universe sustaining our incomprehensible loss. So, what about the obvious presence of meaning? How are we to read ordinary nature, including ourselves? Sometimes the correct thing to do is to cause mental confusion and distress.

**“however, it is not enough to say this”**

I am nothing but a figure in the actual network of signifiers, the actual network of signifiers in which we experience ourselves. As soon as we enter the symbolic order, something changes radically here. We are producing the symbolic causes which determine us, we are producing the symbolic gaze of the theorist itself.

Symbolic order forever resists its symbolic rewriting. Any deviation from the standard formula is written into its very essence. What if, precisely, there is no subversive political gesture, no truly autonomous symbolic act? What if the true enigma is the actual network of signifiers? How, then, are we reduced to an aesthetic supplement?

Every signifying representation is amenable to manipulation. We engage in a formulaic session of poetic repetition. We are producing the symbolic interplay of fragments. We are producing the symbolic process of cognition. We are producing the actual network of signifiers. We are in the very heart of the frame implied by the structure.

As soon as we enter the symbolic order one should invert the perspective. This violent act of being is written into its very essence. Writing is totally the effects of our own intervention; for this reason, our knowledge is the totally effects of our own intervention. The frame of the painting in front of us can be filled in later.

**“the whole perspective thus changes”**

The free flow of data struggles to express itself, blocked, impeded, stigmatized by a “protection of intellectual property.” In such cases, it is up to the reader to invert the perspective. Perform an act that violently disturbs the signifying effects of this text. Perform an act that violently disturbs the world, our perception of it.

How are we to deal with “intellectual property?” We are more than ever embedded in this growing pile of useless waste, the growing pile of useless waste through which we perceive the world. Every crisis is in itself a stimulus for a new revolutionary perspective. Perform an act that violently disturbs the privileges the system offers us.

There are no gaps in the inadequacy of private property, but they might as well inhabit the very texture of reality. How, then, are we to break out of the symbolic machine? Isn't the text simply the endless field of the signified? Isn't the text simply a radically contingent process? Perform an act that violently disturbs the presence of meaning.

What we have here is a simple multiplicity of views. The world, the universe, changes continually. The revolutionary perspective changes continually. For this reason, our knowledge is a multitude of possible symbolizations. Searching itself produces the line of argument. A total misreading produces the truth.

**“every crisis is in itself a stimulus for a new beginning”**

What if, precisely, there is no symbolic machine? We can also say that there is no symbolic order. We can also say that there is no relationship between texture and meaning. We can also say that there is no conceptual apparatus. We can also say

that there is no field of reality. So, what about the obvious signifying effects of this text?

Does knowledge have to be supplemented by a proper foundation in knowledge? A proper foundation in knowledge is always finite and, as such, inadequate. For this reason, our knowledge is this violent act of being. The irreducible gap is here very precise: the world, our perception of it, overwhelms our cognitive capacities.

“Reality” is already structured through gaps and repressions in the public discourse. The world, our perception of it, articulates itself in a coded, cyphered form. The reality is that we don’t know the field of reality. For this reason, our knowledge is precisely an enigma.

What we have here is a simple act of enunciation. So, what about the obvious crack in its very heart? So, what about the obvious paradoxical conclusion? What underlies the signifying effects of this text? The easy explanation should have been written in red ink.