

Zizek and his Panic: A Critical Schellingian Review

Virgilio Rivas, Polytechnic University of the Philippines

Abstract

True to his early Schellingian roots, Slavoj Zizek (2020, 78), in his recent book, *Pandemic! Covid-19 Shakes the World* describes a virus as “a kind of zero-level life,” invoking Schelling’s Naturphilosophie. Perhaps the closest reference, though Zizek did not mention it, is his second major work on the subject, namely, *First Outline of A System of the Philosophy of Nature* (written in 1799) where Schelling originally propounded the theory of nature’s ‘duplicity’ (Schelling 2004). In the following discussions, we will situate Zizek’s timely intervention within the context of his naturalism that politically mediates the differential flows of the present world (capitalism, not to mention) and the subject itself, against the background of a space of difference between the two, whereby the virus acts as a kind of deferral mechanism in which something like the future is suspended, finally rendering the relation motionless. The discussions will also briefly situate Zizek’s political naturalism within contemporary political discourse involving some of his direct and indirect engagements with Agamben, Latour, Badiou, Berardi, Deleuze (especially concerning the latter’s vitalism), and others. This critical review stakes out a view of Zizek’s recent intervention as a timely polemic, consistent with his global image as one of the most dependable public intellectuals of our troubled time.

Keywords: Covid-19, irritability, Naturphilosophie, pandemic, sensibility, Schelling

Political Naturalism vs. Exaggerated Panic

In 'Philosophical Letters on Criticism and Dogmatism,' which predates his famous *Naturphilosophie*, Schelling identifies the proverbial synthetic ego or the transcendental I as a suspension apparatus that forces itself to create an artificial environment between the real world and the self. It is through this ego that, as Schelling argues, one's "intuition of the world becomes restricted and [therefore] the less possible is that abandonment to the world" (1980,157). The same can be said to resonate in the present. When historically determinate purposes, which generally represent capitalist realism today, are made to prevent a kind of "reciprocal yielding in contest" (1980,157) between the world and the self, the result is an environed space, the existing neoliberal order, so to speak, that is as much devoid of truth as it is of beauty (1980, 175) in the sense that, as Schelling would have it, everything is lacking in life, vivacity, and grace, and the determinate contradictions of existence whose resolutions are somehow inherent in them. In this space of difference, a deadlock ensues between the world and the self.

The key to understanding this premise is, nonetheless, more than what Schelling had permitted to develop in his *Naturphilosophie*, namely, the Hegelian sublation of the ego in the form of overcoming its immediacy into a being "recollected in-itself, ready for conversion" (Hegel 1977, 17). In the Hegelian sense, it is the point at which the subject becomes a being-for-itself, outside of the arbitrary difference that defined a previous relation, in such a way that an ethical subject actively sublates the once static relation between the 'I' and the 'world' that takes the relation, retroactively, in the former sense mentioned, as "its own doing" (1977, 21). In *Pandemic*, Žižek takes this Hegelian ethical self-admission to the existential level of our present relation to the viral crisis: "[At] an even more general level, viral epidemics remind us of the ultimate contingency and meaninglessness of our lives: no matter how magnificent the spiritual edifices we, humanity, construct, a stupid natural contingency like a virus or an asteroid can end it all . . . not to mention the lesson of ecology, which is that we, humanity, can also unknowingly contribute to this end (2020, 52). Even so, while this being ready for conversion suggests that a particular subject can chart its own future, Žižek would still rein in his Hegelian optimism. This conversion is always challenged by the internal resolution to touch the void, the less than nothing (Žižek 2012, 4), in the face of the uncertainty of a strange, non-relational horizon that looms ahead, in which, as historical crises may attest, is at risk of falling back onto the state of relation it once struggled to recover from, thus leading us back to the Schellingian critique of the space of difference installed by the pure subjectivity of the ego.

Moving ahead, I would like to suggest here that the political naturalism that informs Zizek's recent intervention amid the pandemic involves a deeper emphasis on the 'natural duplicity of things' (Schelling 2004). In Schellingian terms, this duplicity militates against anthropogenic or rational disambiguation of the sense of threat known to us. These threats range from systems collapse, attendant to human-induced crises, to a more extensive form of geo-trauma triggered by a phase extinction of organic sensibility when life can no longer reproduce, starting with the reduction of sensibility to the mere involuntary movement (Schelling 2004,145). The latter is most popularly attributed to an impending climate regime change in light of extreme climate conditions' perceptible consequences that are certain to take their toll on bodily organisms in decades to come.

In a more technical sense, Schelling ascribes extinction to the predominance of 'irritability' which he defines as the "armor of the sensible ... the chains in which it is bound" (2004,107), where irritability means the "activity of the formative drive," and "by which the organic appears to be moved inwardly"(2004, 124). But without sensibility to act upon it, irritability as a force of production or a sheer formative drive lacks a condition of possibility of something like individuation, its possibility of manifesting as an object of nature, say, a body organ. But with the organ, this force "must decrease," albeit, maintained as an inner force of production so that, consequently, sensibility is prevented from "[passing] directly into the outer movements" (2004,143), which roughly translates into organ termination, death or nothingness. As a 'negative principle of irritability,' sensibility must be protected from the positivization of irritability, prodded by external influences (Schelling 2004, 44), where all activities are directed outward in pursuit of objects (or biorhythmic spaces) in which to individuate (or with which to humanize under the inner pressure of our nature). Therefore, with the present circumstances outside, this is tantamount to embracing contamination and infection.

Here the outside is characterized by a de-individuating force, the pure positive principle of irritability in which sensibility becomes incapable of counter-acting the formative drive to occupy a disposition, a character, or subjectivity, under the circumstances when sensibility can no longer sustain itself as a self-reproducing agent, sexually or socially speaking, which incidentally the terms of the quarantine and of physical distancing protocols practically impose. In short, the preponderance of irritability through outside influences that the pandemic in a sense manifests (the natural derivation of the virus incidentally speaks of what Schelling understood an 'outside influence' to be an "an original natural predisposition or germ" [2004, 44], the formative drive of the general species) implies the eventual impossibility of the organism.

The coronavirus behaves like this positive principle of irritability in which sensibility is stimulated to pass directly into outward movements, recalling here Žižek's description of the early response to the pandemic, that is, to panic: "When a masked citizen of Wuhan walks around searching for medicine or food, there are definitely no anti-consumerist thoughts on his or her mind, just panic, anger and fear" (2020, 58). This example of a broader geocosmic sensibility of panicking already demonstrates Žižek's political naturalism by first re-inscribing this panic as non-political. Subsequently, in his criticism of Giorgio Agamben, this political naturalism proceeds by way of re-inscribing what, for instance, Agamben would designate as a conspiracy theory, into the familiar Schellingian notion of unwieldy 'remainder'. In *Pandemic*, Žižek describes this remainder as that of life's malfunctioning through "higher mechanisms of multiplication" that "[continue] to haunt (infect) them" which, by no means, can be "re-integrated into the subordinate moment of higher level of life" (2020, 79). Concerning the necessity of containing the virus, Agamben's position, for which he has been widely criticized, not only by Žižek, aims to positivize the sense of freedom 'under threat' into an active suspicion that it is a state conspiracy. In a nutshell, Žižek's criticism aims at naturally disambiguating (also a way of de-politicizing) the "exaggerated panic" that Agamben projects. The virus itself diffracts the idea that a human system for its end can colonize it. The truth is rather the reverse. (If the reports were true that the virus was created from a lab, and was accidentally released, it attests all the more to the inability of humans to subordinate it to a purpose¹).

The force of this disambiguation is nature's duplicity, intrinsic to the inhuman binary-leveling force of nature concerning the nature/culture divide, which by no means, as others might want to suggest, gushing over the return of nature from a quasi-alienated state, is taking a timely resurgence. Or rather, from the anthropogenic perspective traumatized by the threat of mass infection, the apparent healing of nature is seen as a welcome form of the return of the repressed, a resurgent natural movement, returning to "spaces of human abandonment" (Searle and Turnbull 2020, 2). In this light, the dilemma of the exaggerated panic is all the more evident when outside spaces are barred from humans during quarantine, which helps nature to re-emerge, vis-à-vis the suspicion (the 'exaggerated panic') that movements are unnaturally curtailed which must be opposed by freedom-loving people, but may lead to several existential contradictions. For instance, the eagerness to socialize and question the quarantine's wisdom poses a dilemma, among others, to climate change advocacy. While less human activities may help climate change to revert to a less dangerous condition for organic life on Earth, the collateral is undeniable – freedom must be limited to the minimum requirement of survival.

Quarantine and lockdown protocols which not only help in curbing a continuing viral wave (most successful in China, notwithstanding a second wave has been suspected²) but also apparently have assisted in the relative reversal of climate temperature, can be effective only because freedom across the spectrum of labor and subjectivity in society is restricted literally to the home. Nevertheless, one begins to see the contradictions of how nature is looked upon as transcendent to freedom when a host of other factors plays out its logical course. For instance, the climate crisis during the pandemic is supposed to have been miraculously addressed by the relative preponderance of irritability over sensibility, threatening the very centrality of the human that fears going outside to re-occupy social spaces that have been built at the expense of nature, but only, take note, to the extent that the pandemic is still wreaking havoc on human bodies. Nevertheless, with recent reopenings of the economy, despite rising cases, the idea of transcendent nature is back in the fold of human 'economic-teleological purpose' (Schelling 2018,13). Thus, when nature can be freely re-purposed to varying human ends, depending on circumstances, then nature, or any of its insubordinate remainders, such as Covid-19, is no more strictly a natural phenomenon, as Bruno Latour recently argues, "than the famines of the past or the current climate crisis" (2020).

As Latour would add, indeed, "society has long since moved beyond the narrow confines of the social sphere." This mainly suggests that the social sphere has now morphed into its veritable opposite, a natural domain, but still, paradoxically, contrary to Latour's expectations, within the context of a human-dominated ecology dictating what stands for natural, as in the Kantian teleological sense, what satisfies its "[commensurability] with the human point of view" (Kant 1987, 286). Oddly enough, past the social sphere, humanity is now facing an era of non-teleological, non-natural negotiations in composing a world or worlds without the necessity of a higher arbiter. In the past this arbiter had always assumed an anthropomorphic form, such as God, History, State, People, or Nature, which, as Latour emphasized (in *Facing Gaia*), "has inherited ... all the functions of an all-seeing and all-encompassing God of the old days, and who is just as incapable of bringing its Providence to have any effect whatsoever on the Earth!"(2017, 46).

Given the many paradoxes that the coronavirus entails, of which Zizek identifies several examples, even this non-natural phenomenon that Latour talks about has to find a minimum grounding in a quarantined, nay, self-arbitrating quasi-natural subject. Zizek likens this subject to a people who are now, as he quotes the psychoanalyst Gabriel Tupinamba whose clinical experience with HIV patients draws the same analogy with panicky subjects quarantined by Covid-19, "the most anxious, and exposed to the worst fantasies of impotence, since not even a

change in their habits is delimiting the singularity of this situation in their daily lives” (2020, 108). Nevertheless, as Latour asserts, somehow in a positive tone, this condition of freedom, in fact, “could serve as a dress rehearsal for the next crisis, the one in which the orientation of living conditions is going to be posed as a challenge to all of us, as will all the details of daily existence that we will have to learn to sort out carefully” (2020). Incidentally, this next crisis is the crisis of climate change. If this is a dress rehearsal, then we are looking into the possibility of freedom adapting to a non-natural phenomenon, or as Latour specifically adumbrated, “the end of the Nature that served as the consort of politics” (2017, 47). In our appropriation of Schelling, this hints at an unprecedented form of negotiation, albeit, devoid of a higher arbiter, such as even Nature itself, with the preponderance of external irritability that is about to confine us longer than necessary in safe but regulated spaces that the pandemic and the impending climate crisis impose on humanity.

Less we miss out, in Zizekian terms, the non-natural phenomenon intrinsic to this condition of freedom paradoxically points to the negotiable nature of the consequence of this dress rehearsal (banking on the residual subjectivity trained in quarantine and lockdown protocols) but also at the same time the non-negotiable duplicity of the insubordinate remainder that impinges on any form of social or political intervention. Arguably, Zizek teases out the Latourian unconscious here in terms of his criticism of the equal living materiality of non-human elements which Zizek attributes to the “triumphant return of capitalist animism,” for instance, in terms of “treating markets or financial capital as living entities” (2020,44). Amid the pandemic, markets have become unobtrusively alive, courtesy of media corporations around the world worried about the phenomenon that the coronavirus has brought upon the markets that were made to panic as humans had behaved since the outbreak. This is not an indictment of Latour’s Whiteheadian/Lovelockian concept of the Earth. Instead, we are proposing a careful interrogation of his proposal to view the earth “*without taking it to be an already composed whole*, without adding to it a coherence that it lacks, and yet without deanimating it by representing the organisms that keep the thin film of the critical zones alive as mere inert and passive passengers on a physio-chemical system” (Latour 2017, 86).

Be that as it may, Latour’s political naturalism may be interrogated here by a Zizekian negotiation with the necessity of a remainder-subject, a subject defined by a decision to produce itself out of nothing, out of the unconditioned and inevitable necessity of something that cannot be thought (Schelling 2006, 29), instead decided out of what is left of the production or activity of nature. Isn’t precisely this unconditioned inevitability of what Zizek describes as stupid multiplication of the virus without purpose or reason that generates a new subject in a new non-

natural environment, different from the pre-pandemic world (the 'social sphere' of Latour)? Isn't this the subject now compelled to accept, for instance, that the true gesture of sociality, a defining characteristic of humanity, is to isolate from others? In this sense, the human is defining itself anew, non-naturally at the trail of the inevitability of blind natural production, the dark natural derivation of the becoming-subject of being. The subject retains this plastic origin in the sense that it is a remainder of a rough transition to pure objecthood, as is any living product of nature that will confront the eventual termination of its activity, whereby any point of realization of the subject's potential at present is no less than the "content of [an ongoing] injunction" (Zizek 2012, 123). That only goes to show what Schelling reiterates in his controversial *Freedom* essay that "darkness is the necessary inheritance" of beings (Schelling 2006, 29), which in *Less Than Nothing* Zizek would echo in more or less the same predicament: "The frustrating nature of our human existence, the very fact that our lives are forever out of joint, marked by a traumatic imbalance, is what propels us towards permanent creativity" (2012, 132).

'The Old is Dying and the New Cannot be Born'

Zizek paints a scenario under which this condition of freedom as a Latourian dress rehearsal could play out, if humanity is to adapt to a new cycle of crises, not without incurring heavy humanitarian losses, such as required of attaining herd immunity:

What we are dealing with here is the distinction, elaborated by Lacan, between reality and the real: reality is external reality, our social and material space to which we are used and within which we are able to orient ourselves and interact with others, while the real is a spectral entity, invisible and for that very reason appearing as all-powerful. The moment this spectral agent becomes part of our reality (even if it means catching a virus), its power is localized, it becomes something we can deal with (even if we lose the battle). As long as this transposition into reality cannot take place, 'we get trapped either in anxious paranoia (pure globality) or resort to ineffective symbolisations through acting outs that expose us to unnecessary risks (pure locality)' (2020, 110)

The paradox here is the willingness to accommodate the worse to come out of the pandemic. If this has to be a dress rehearsal for the worst climate crisis ahead, one may want to urge this 'zero-level life form' to prolong its viral wave just so the worst-case scenario can be averted. Alternatively, we can help the virus perform this task by us catching the virus. It may be in the mutual interest of the virus and our obligation to climate to spin out its global mayhem.

However, as Žižek seriously argues, “This is not a call to sadistically enjoy widespread suffering insofar as it helps our Cause—on the contrary, the point is to reflect upon the sad fact that we need a catastrophe to be able to rethink the very basic features of the society in which we live”(2020, 41). The virus has to be localized as an effective form of symbolization, as Žižek suggests, in terms of us spectrally becoming-virus for all we care, by paradoxically “[structuring] our daily lives in a stable and meaningful way” (2020, 113), that is to say, as indifferent as the virus itself to long-term global humanitarian costs (‘pretend the lockdown is just a game’). This must be so effective that by the time the climate emergency arrives in this decade or the next, we, as humanity, may be able to confront the worst crisis, this time in genuinely naked affirmation of our readiness for conversion, *a la* Hegel (speaking of admitting that the crisis is after all ‘our own doing’). Our pandemic training in quarantine and lockdown protocols, as well as physical and social distancing, can help us learn to freely expose the bareness of our finitude to extreme weather conditions in the face of mass extinction.

Ironically, despite the unprecedented lowering of carbon emission during the pandemic as the usual economic production is put on hold globally, the amount of carbon concentration in the atmosphere does not significantly change. According to climate watch and advocacy centers around the world, the year 2020 is still expected to be the warmest year in recorded climate history; even before the onset of the pandemic, the first quarter was already the second warmest.³ This echoes in a recent article by Searle and Turnbull (2020, 2), suggesting that in this paradoxical condition of nature, we must be wary of the ‘disguise’ of “conservatism by celebrating nature’s apparent recovery.” This is a form of conservatism that can amuse us with a joke, this time with an added twist – the state has created the virus to de-clutter the atmosphere of dangerous levels of carbon content. In the name of the most urgent task of humanity today, the state becomes the defender of life against capital-driven Anthropocene. Couldn’t this very grotesque fiction provide the reference for state intervention that Agamben would associate with “the usual paradigm of surveillance and control”? (Žižek 2020, 76), which is, of course, absurd?

In the meantime, within the space of difference that still defines the present era, in which the future is trapped within a frozen gap between the world and existence, the latter all the more hard-pressed by the pandemic, it becomes possible to ask, with respect to this peculiar Schellingian predicament, what difference does it make if a new climate regime, about to starve and displace and kill millions in decades to come, becomes a bona fide reality? Žižek partly echoes this sentiment: “It is clear that epidemics will return, combined with other ecological

threats, from droughts to locusts [Now] we see that warnings about such epidemics in the past were fully justified, and that there is no end to them (2020, 102).

Back in 2012, Žižek described an analogical counter-point to the kind of crisis denial that erupted in our midst. In his criticism of Parmenides' metaphysical conception of the fleeting 'instant' that cannot be properly accounted for to occur in time, but also paradoxically is 'poised' for both time and outside time, which already connotes a 'crisis', he then quotes Gramsci: "[The] crisis lies precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born. In the interregnum, a variety of morbid symptoms appear" (2012, 61). These symptoms proliferate in "two becomings", the present and the instant of the crisis, such as Covid-19. Under this condition, the specificity of the pandemic is lost – it is natural and non-natural, which lends credence to conspiracy theory, or a kind of religious retribution. Instead, the viral crisis's hybridity overdetermines the response to the pandemic, but which, on our behalf, moves us in no other direction than in the frozen gap between two becomings. Even so, the specificity of the pandemic crisis points to the fact that it is open to hybrid response just by being itself a remainder of the unfinished production of nature (that Schelling calls the duplicity of the organism as both unfinished product and productivity, thus rendering it vulnerable to natural predispositions or germs [2004, 44]). But it is also our present response that throws us deeper into this necessary dark inheritance, thus indefinitely trapped in that middle space, that helps the virus mutate non-naturally, that determines how the virus will further behave, and thus, by perceptible causation, how we will come out as humanity after this so-called Latourian 'dress rehearsal'.

How not to exaggerate panic

Oddly put, for Žižek, what can rescue us from this frozen space and break the interregnum is our ability to panic, especially now that the second wave of Covid-19 is imminent: "The panic we are experiencing bears witness to the fact that ... we are no longer ready to accept plagues as our fate" (2020, 103). We can situate Žižek's positive appreciation of panic within the ecological context of assemblage theory, granting that the viral mutation has created a determinate interspace between natural and non-natural becomings, as we described above, that depends on a vitalist conception of a non-filiation model of immanent life. More specifically, this interspace is generated by the "encounter between heterogeneous series" (Sholtz 2015, 34), which transforms sensibility, as the viral outbreak provides an example via contagion, mutation, and propagation.

In his criticism of Deleuze, Žižek describes this space as “a traumatic point of time, a kind of magnetic attractor which tears moments of past, present, and future out of their proper contexts (Žižek 2012, 28). Similarly, the whole idea of contamination in a Deleuzian sense, as Leonard Lawlor (2008) points out, is purposively hyperbolic in the sense that, apropos of an epidemic outbreak, “infection ... would produce a people contaminated with the feverish thought of the struggle against death” (2008, 182). The proximity of panic to feverishness in terms of a new people coming out of a dress rehearsal cannot be overestimated: both are overdetermined by the globalizing force of present capitalist order that facilitates the viral outbreak. Capitalism is the very interspace of this panic and fever under the weight of globalization that acts as if it is that negative principle of irritability urging peoples to direct their movement outward in search of individuation in a rapidly de-individuating, globalizing world which is now characterized by a “fusion of living and technological systems,” pertinently called “viral modernity” (Peters, Jandric, and McLaren 2020). ‘Viral modernity’ is defined as a kind of transversal becoming between animate and inanimate that, incidentally, Deleuze would identify with imperceptibility, multiplicity and readiness to dive into the “vital flux of immanent life” (Scholtz 2015, 135). This could turn out to be a more proactive form of interspace life than the disposition of governments during an epidemic, which tends, as it were, complacent as they are, to “sit back and wait for the avalanche” (Lederberg 1993, 3).

But also, at any rate, a feverish form of transversality is not invulnerable to paranoia (which is opposed to schizophrenia as we will elaborate later). The paranoid is just as equally capable of animating the social field as by schizophrenic means. Both deal, in Deleuzian terms, “directly with multiplicities, as can be seen from their respective deliria with regard to peoples, races, history, and geography” (Lapoujade 2014, 190). Concomitant to the space of difference that we mentioned concerning Schelling’s critique of the inability to escape the middle space, a paranoiac line of flight may instead prove to be symptomatic of morbidity than it is of a life-affirming escape from a constricted space of homogenous assemblage. The paranoid is different from someone who panics in the sense that with an actual, not hyperbolic, threat of contamination, the panicky subject knows that the very “absence of panic” would occasion real fear of uncertainty, vis-à-vis the thought that panicking is fueled from above with the “ideal pretext” of a viral outbreak (Žižek 2020, 74). Thus, the paranoid gives credence to totalitarian instincts.

In the meantime, the schizoid, whose outside “peregrinations” constitute its “way of rediscovering the earth,” is the transversal type (opposed to the paranoiac) who, as Deleuze and Guattari carefully adumbrate, “seeks out the very limit of capitalism: he is its inherent

tendency brought to fulfillment, its surplus product, its proletariat, and its exterminating angel” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 35). In honor of Franz Kafka, they called it a form of ‘stationary flight’ which produces escape as an act in a “nonparallel and nonsymmetrical” way, to the extent that it deterritorializes escape into an escape, in which escape, for that matter, ceases to be an image or representation of flight. Instead, it becomes an act of ‘capturing a fragment of the escape code’ (1986, 14), perhaps, an indiscernible bug (like Gregor Samsa) that refuses this time to make escape or flight for its sake function as an overbearing code.

Nevertheless, what if the virus is dark enough in the matter of its genealogy that a stationary flight such as one can hopelessly endure in quarantine cannot totally withstand the seduction of the outside, the ‘original predisposition or germs’, with which, in the Deleuzian sense, ‘rhizomes can be formed’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 10) via a deterritorializing fusion with the virus but in such a way that the latter does not become an image of the human (‘viruses are not translators’ [1987, 53])? This image of the human is no less than a reterritorialized version of the anthropogenic appropriation of viral life. In this sense, the stationary escapee, in order to become the virus, must risk going outside, that is, to panic. We are not framing this transversality in the literal sense of panic. The panicky subject does not aim to become the schizo that he was in ‘rediscovering the earth’, nor to become a reactionary, but rather to deprive the virus of its capability to become ‘us’. But how? How to do it without regressing to being a schizo whose peregrinations and restlessness have also contributed in transforming the earth that it is now in which, as Franco Berardi once argued, “there is no dimension of normalcy to restore” (Berardi 2013), speaking of the deterritorializing impulse of the schizo? In a more critical note, for Berardi, “far from being the methodology of liberation, rhizomatics should be viewed as a methodology of the permanent deterritorialization of global financial capitalism” (2013). Fortunately, this is the finance capitalism that is now in relative lockdown—the rhizomatics that fuels its once steady acceleration is held in quarantine, and physical and social distancing. Meanwhile, in Zizekian terms, the schizo is now negated by a form of global solidarity to stop peregrinating and rediscovering the earth, which, as it were, “expresses itself at the level of everyday life in strict commands to avoid close contacts with others, even to self-isolate” (2020, 42).

In a sense, the impossible happened. The schizo, which imitates life at the fundamental level of multiplication and propagation, but is also “the hidden cost of economic development” (Kate Jones in Zizek 2020, 89), is put on hold. The impossible here is that life has somehow stopped. Here the schizo, which is the rhizomatic impulse to imitate life by propagating and forming non-filial, heterogeneous alliances, relatively grinds to a halt at the behest of the

unfinished germinal production of nature. Žižek declares: “The impossible happened, our world has stopped, AND impossible is what we have to do to avoid the worst, which is—what? (2020, 86). Among the worst to avoid, Žižek identifies ‘exaggerated panic’. But also, as we already know by now, other things to avoid is to ‘(re)rediscover the earth’, to regain the pursuit of a new series of flight that in the era of the Anthropocene, as Benjamin Bratton describes, will only give the Earth “another zombie life” (Bratton 2012, 49). It is interesting to note here, as Berardi additionally stressed, that the rhizomatics is the “accelerating pace of the Unconscious,” and therefore, by definition, is necessarily “the official narrative of the Anthropocene: “‘We’, the human species, unconsciously destroyed nature to the point of hijacking the Earth system into a new geological epoch” (Bonneuil and Fressoz 2016, 12). The awakening from this unconscious is the reflexive moment of schizoid becoming, the rediscovery of the earth as it is discovered for the second time, which transforms the previous reflexivity into the ideology of the present in the sense that the rediscovered truth is the testament to the agent’s enlightenment, but not to its capability to reverse its action. Accordingly, in the period of the Anthropocene, this discovery must not “[serve] ... to credit our own excellence” (Bonneuil and Fressoz 2016, 12), if we are not willing to abandon the very cause of anthropogenic destruction of planetary system since the last 200 years. Žižek is more straightforward when he argues that our “general ecological struggle,” which the coronavirus has placed at the most immediate center of humanity’s predicament, involves, for the most part, the struggle “against ideological mystification” (2020, 89). This argument resonates in Berardi’s recent wager about the virus: If Covid-19 can condition “a mental jump that no political preaching could produce”(Berardi 2020), then the immediate ramifications of overcoming the reflexivity of the schizoid, concerning our Anthropocene predicament, can hopefully cut short the collective transition into an ideological pretext for renewed mobilization of enlightenment ideals and its engines of acceleration in the guise of healing the Earth. As this transformation implies, we must “de-politicize the long history of the Anthropocene” (Bonneuil and Fressoz 2016, 12), including the rhizomatics' participation in it.

Communism and the Viral Limit of Political Imaginary

Though Berardi appeared to be optimistic of the long-term political consequence of the ‘side-communication’ (we are here liberally borrowing a Deleuzian concept [1987, 53]) of the viral epidemic, one thing that delimits this vision is the fact that viruses do not have ontological commitments, nor possess the necessity to actualize our anthropic aims. ‘Viruses are not translators’, as Deleuze and Guattari would emphasize. But also, by a double bind: human

translators are not viruses, not in the sense that they do not amuse themselves with ontological obligations in the same way as viruses, but rather in the sense of the duplicitous origin of viruses concerning their human hosts, that is to say, both have equal validity in terms of natural production. Neither of the two is a subject and an object to one another, nor producer or produced; rather, both are defined by their mutual indifference (Schelling 1994, 145) which, paradoxically enough, establishes the very possibility of an 'organization', a plane of consistency that is neither intensively oriented to life (organic), nor reducible to the conditions of non-life (the inorganic). In many ways, this transcends the vitalism inherent in Deleuzian rhizomatics that singularly tends to side with life, thereby secretly hijacking a weak version of telos from the very absence of an end, the non-bounded life (Colebrook 2014, 135). This idea is now greatly challenged by the viral outbreak whose expressionism as a viral movement owes much to its necessary dark inheritance than to the univocity of being and expression, a kind of "analogical or equivocal ontology" (Smith in Bryden 2001, 179) within the strict immanent plane of life. In other words, there are no rights of identity and negation to which the difference between the virus and the human body can be subordinated, notwithstanding that, in Deleuze, these rights are only expressive and not derivative of a deeper ontological reality, or rather, merely a "deepening of immanence" (Smith in Bryden, 2001, 180).

The 'deepening of immanence', once again, is too rhizomatic to overcome the circularity of the reflexivity of becoming. Deleuze, in his early work, *Difference and Repetition*, attempted to disambiguate this immanent reflexivity of expressionism. Via Spinoza, he sought to re-inscribe the Spinozist substance within the context of 'repetition and eternal return', that is to say, by "[making] the substance turn around the modes" (Deleuze 1994, 304), thereof, as he would expand in his later work (with Guattari), the necessity of a transversal subject (always in motion) to make this actual turning-around a return of identity "as a secondary power" (Deleuze 1994,41). This power is a modal power behind the "invention of new concepts" (Smith in Bryden 2001, 180) integral to the 'deepening of immanence' in terms of "a power series" (Duffy 2006, 223). Going back to Schelling's space of difference, this power series is the global expansion of the deterritorializing modes of rhizomatic becoming, which, as we mentioned previously, expresses itself more fully in the 'official narrative of the Anthropocene', which is the becoming reflexive of the schizoid without necessarily escaping that space of difference that separates the world from 'us'. It merely "turns around the different" (Deleuze 1994, 41). Reflexivity is the commitment to 'turn the modes repetitively.'

Absolute Recoil and Covid-19

This leads us to Zizek's more to the point intervention: the idea of the viral limit to political expressionism. Before the publication of *Pandemic*, Zizek did an interview that pretty much summarizes his most recent pre-pandemic philosophical outlook (Zizek and Aqeel 2020a), which we will try here to temporarily dislocate to accommodate his early Schellingian background, speaking of doing a Hegelian double bind to a specific variant of Hegel's thought, that is, Zizek's Hegelianism. (We will discuss the implication of this interview towards the last part of the present section).

In general, I think this procedure is not a disservice to Zizek's Hegelianism. As he would attest, the pandemic adds an unprecedented challenge to the Hegelian sublation of logical modalities which are modalities of pre-pandemic Anthropocene, vis-à-vis the Spinozist/Nietzschean turning-around of modes in Deleuzian interspace, heavily saturated by transversal subjects, if not by paranoiac ones (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 66). Both are overdetermined by flows of capital across the globe, reflecting the flows of reterritorialization of subjects, albeit, restricted in the realm of culture, and the social and political sphere. It is interesting to note here that, as Fisher and Berardi separately observed, this complete uncoupling from anything even remotely re-territorializable such as culture is the signature of the Unconscious, its accelerating speed of deterritorialization, unmoored from references or codes. This view of the 'unconscious' resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's early examination of the term, for instance, in *Anti-Oedipus*, which "belongs to the realm of physics" (1983, 283). Simply put, the unconscious is not a code, much less a psychological cryptogram, 'but matter itself' (1983, 283). This leads us to the natural, dark inheritance of the unconscious.

The pandemic is the 'unprethinkable' remainder of natural production that disturbs the modal movements – it is thinkable as a matter of epidemiological reminder of the world's hybridity that is vulnerable to all types of infection, but also unthinkable relative to the modern human's propensity for crisis denial. In Schellingian terms, Covid-19 is an "inchoate remainder in the ground" that "persists as a threat to undermine" the immanent materialities of contemporary existence (Love and Schmitt in Schelling 2006, xxi). Its threat comes from the fact that where modality or "possibility or potency ... are excluded thought has no authority" (Schelling 2007, 202). Simply put, the pandemic excludes that authority, at least for now. In proportion to the viral threat, even scientific reason is at odds with its drive for precision and exactitude vis-à-vis the resistance of nature that science must know how to respect, specifically its capability to diffract our representation of its "magnitude and might" (Kant 1987, 100), speaking of Kant's teleological proposition on the idea of the sublime. Here, we can permit a suspension of Hegelian sublation of the modalities of the pre-pandemic world when even

sublation is not necessary at this stage as a new world jumps out of its 'unprethinkability' at precisely that moment when a remainder-subject from pre-Covid-19 dispensation is now constricted in the interspace from which the virus further multiplies and mutates. The virus is not even a "power structure" that is "caught in advance in the network of what it endeavours to undermine" (Zizek 2007, 3), concerning the immanent logic of subversion that power itself conveys from within. The virus does not afford a modality of subversion as if it is a power whose "foundations ... can be shaken because the very stability of its mighty edifice hinges on an inconsistent, fragile balance" (Zizek 2007, 3).

Incidentally, Alain Badiou's recent stance on Covid-19 is a case in point when it comes to inscribing the pandemic within the context of the immanence of power, such as the logical necessity of war, something that approaches the 'power series' of Deleuzian Spinozism except that 'making substance turn around the modes' would amount to submitting the 'power series', not to the conative flow of 'inventing new concepts'. Instead, the power series would be subject to a truth procedure like politics (more on this later) in which the usual recourse to the enemy that "is nothing new under the contemporary sun" (Badiou 2020) is to 'stifle' it. Badiou says: "Faced with the epidemic this kind of statist reflex is inevitable." This reflex is "neutral at the political level." To win the war against the epidemic, we must be aware of the inevitability of state intervention when some kind of a "lethal process" is diffused, leaks across the social sphere. Thus it is only to be expected that nature "(whence the preeminent role of scientists in the matter)" will overlap with the present "social order (whence the authoritarian intervention, and it couldn't be otherwise, of the state)." This provides the overall background against which Badiou declares that as an epidemic, this natural diffusion "will not have ... any noteworthy political consequences in a country like France." Badiou's pronouncements ironically give credence to the idea of state conspiracy (after all the social diffusion of the virus is inevitable, touching on the core instincts of human fear), such as advanced by Agamben ("the state of exception as a normal governing paradigm" [quoted by Zizek 2020, 74]). Even so, Badiou stresses that the inevitability of state intervention, under the guise of the necessity for state war brought upon by the diffusion of a disastrous natural process, is logical enough to belie the tendency of some to think illogically that the state is merely justifying its fascistic impulse.

Though Badiou clarifies that this state intervention must also offer a specific advantage, from what he calls the 'epidemic interlude', for the left and broader progressive movement, even of the necessity of "isolation, to work on new figures of politics, on the project of new political sites, and on the trans-national progress of a third stage of communism after the brilliant one of its invention and the – interesting but ultimately defeated – stage of its statist experimentation"

(Badiou 2020), one is right to wonder if this is tantamount to a waiting game, to wait for the neoliberal state to bungle its war operations. Again, we can foster this criticism of Badiou within the context that the epidemic does not inherently possess a power structure that contains a “crack [that] can be used as a lever for [its] effective subversion” (Zizek 2007, 3), unless, of course, one appropriates the virus into the assemblage of power structures. The state may succeed in this appropriation, but only as far as the nature-society nexus is not yet exceeded by viral mutation. In this sense, Badiou qualifies as Zizek’s unsuspecting target when the latter criticizes the social-constructivist reduction of the pandemic, which Zizek attributes to both “Alt-Right and fake Left” (2020, 76) that denounce the pandemic according to its social meaning. In Badiou’s case, the inevitability of state intervention begs for a nuanced critique. What appears to be a side comment to a similar stance as Badiou has passionately conveyed, Zizek writes: “[The]stance of those who see the crisis as an apolitical moment where state power should do its task and we should just follow its instructions, hoping that some kind of normality will be restored in a not too far future, is a mistake” (2020, 102).

Badiou may be exonerated from this charge, granting Zizek can accommodate a notion of ‘absolute recoil’ from a pre-pandemic stance amid Covid-19. What I want to suggest here is Zizek’s Hegelian adherence to ‘retroactivity’ can exempt Badiou from such criticism, if we are to situate the inevitability of state war within a pre-pandemic world where such necessity of stifling the enemy is justified of its compossibility. In other words, when a state of emergency is nominated as the ‘operator of deduction’(Wahl in Badiou, 2008:x). But this state of emergency today is not war as we know it, but a natural one, which, even in Badiou’s sense, creates a “hole in sense” (Badiou 2008, 43), the sense being the givenness of the situation from which a singularity can be subtracted, such as an event. Incidentally, a CIA report that was released before the start of the new millennium (2000) is more to the point concerning this singularity, outlining possible scenarios subtracted from the possible outbreak of epidemics worldwide which are expected to shape the future of humanity “over the next twenty years:

1. The optimistic contemplation of steady progress in combating communicable disease
2. The forecast of a stalemate, with no decisive gains either by microbes or by humans
3. The consideration of the most pessimistic prospect of deterioration in the position of humans, especially if the world population continues to expand and if megacities continue to grow with their attendant problems of overcrowding, poor sanitation, and unprotected drinking water” (in F. Snowden 2019, 466)

As Snowden reveals, even the CIA is not confident that the second and third scenarios could be prevented by the 'optimism of the first case'. Here is one of the most fearsome global state apparatuses that has anticipated in advance (precisely 20 years since then) the singularity of a "stalemate" and the "deterioration in the position of humans." These deadly consequences of complacency leave the rest of humanity with only their stored wits and inherent evolutionary capacities, their "auto-therapeutic and endo-clinical competencies," especially in the face of "injuries and invasions," or capacities to "overcome the lethal"(Sloterdijk 2013, 8). The CIA knows that the state is no match to this viral singularity, once it escapes from medical and epidemiological enclosures, including the span attention of governments, while we will all be abandoned to our own devices for the good part of riding it out until a herd immunity on natural terms is reached.

Concerning Zizek's Hegelian retroactivity, vis-à-vis Badiou, if state inversion is a logical necessity, then it can be justified because this necessity becomes what it is, retroactively speaking (Zizek, 2020a, 3), that is to say, as expected the state will necessarily bungle its war operations in the face of the pandemic. Paradoxically speaking, the intervention of the state is a logical necessity precisely because it faces an epidemic that it *must* first posit it cannot win, but always from the assumed, retroactively projected standpoint. This necessity is called for by the immanent logic of pre-pandemic/pre-epidemic existence (which is the universal standard of existence). The subject, such as the state, necessarily foresees a chance to reach a post-epidemic stage, and therefore surpass even its own necessity. But right now, both the state and the epidemic are on a 'stalemate.' Neither claims a 'decisive gain' over the other. A stalemate belies the expressive superiority of the state whose necessity is a doubling in the first place: the state expresses its logical necessity over an entity it can only win by riding out the menace that it sows. The paradoxical optimism of this necessity has to be guaranteed by previous *historical* lessons of humanity's experience of epidemics. The underlying logic is that the virus must not push humanity to a stalemate (going for 120 days and counting) for it will be too scandalous to bear, as against the anthropogenic claim of modern human civilization as superior to nature: "we cannot accept plaques as our fate" (Zizek 2020, 103). Curiously enough, this optimism may also be gleaned from Badiou's reference to the general interests that the bourgeois state, for now, has to "make prevail" over that of the class interest of the bourgeoisie, "on account of the internal existence of an 'enemy' that is itself general" (Badiou 2020). As Badiou says, 'in war or epidemic, the state is compelled, sometimes trespassing the normal run of its class nature, to undertake practices that are both more authoritarian and more generally targeted, in order to avoid a strategic catastrophe.' Overall, the state is a pre-pandemic subject

writ large, which now asserts itself against the onslaught of the unprethinkable by presently justifying its 'magnitude and might' in terms of infusing a teleology into its activity whose completion, however, takes time. This is how the state denies the stalemate (for example, by reopening the economies as several nation-states have already done). But, as we have proposed earlier, the retroactivity that underlies the state's logic of subversion is plausible only because the epidemic is deemed to be historically winnable.

Against this assumption, Žižek argues, which has become one of the most quoted passages in *Pandemic*, "the ongoing epidemic is a result of natural contingency at its purest, that it just happened and hides no deeper meaning. In the larger order of things, we are just a species with no special importance" (2020, 14). By historical, we mean the familiar power series of making the substance turn around the modes, its conditions of emergence in the way it unwittingly or deliberately participates in the making of the anthropogenic claim over nature, via the state and capital, prevail.

Conclusion: Žižek and his Panic

In short, this is the most Schellingian period of Žižek's career as a major contemporary thinker. In technically denying that the unprethinkable like Covid-19 is historically winnable, Žižek offers an ahistorical solution:

As the world-wide epidemic develops, we need to be aware that market mechanisms will not be enough to prevent chaos and hunger. Measures that appear to most of us today as 'Communist' will have to be considered on a global level: coordination of production and distribution will have to take place outside the coordinates of the market. (Žižek 2020, 12).

Žižek is at his most Schellingian in the sense that the pre-pandemic Hegelian retroactivity becomes devoid of rationality, necessarily deflated as a process of self-sublation whose efficacy is only possible under the condition that there are reserved power series enough to take advantage of the rather undeclared stalemate with microbes. These reserved power series that the neoliberal order still hopes to maximize under the pandemic include national sovereignty, but also the markets as well as the docility of labor subjects, not to mention the digital subjects in stationary flights quarantined at home, whose data consumption across various internet platforms will determine, among others, the market dynamics and behavior of post-pandemic capitalism. Nonetheless, these power series are utilized not without the fear of being

overwhelmed by continuing viral mutation whose only self-limit is herd immunity, which entails irreversible human costs.

Zizek is at his most Schellingian especially in his call for a new form of Communism amid the global rise in coronavirus infection: “The coronavirus epidemic does not signal just the limit of the market globalization, it also signals the even more fatal limit of nationalist populism which insists on full state sovereignty” (2020, 68). One way to put this communism into perspective is to become as ahistorical as the virus. Contrary to Latour, this still requires a subject, a remainder-subject that is both natural (of which it is a remainder) and non-natural (speaking of the ‘loss of Nature as consort to politics’). Contrary to Badiou, it is a subject that is not a product of subtraction from an inevitable singularity (like the epidemic). Rather, it is a subject that escapes the space of difference between itself and nature, and ensures that the horizon ahead that it confronts is not an empty remainder, devoid of its potential for retroactivity (this time, Hegel comes around). But it is a Hegelian retro-activity that is no longer defined by the immanence of the space of difference we mentioned, such as what Zizek would refer to ‘disaster capitalism’, or the barbarism of this ‘space’ that is prone to the illusion of power series that are already thwarted by the viral epidemic, but rather by a form of “disaster Communism” (2020,103). The latter presupposes a simple disaster concept at the core of communism: its destructive aestheticization of the difference between the self and the world, subject and nature, a kind of difference-leveling extinction. Again, as Zizek reiterates, “the point is to reflect upon the sad fact that we need a catastrophe” (2020, 41).

Lastly, Zizek points out the truth of this destructive aesthesis (which is the pre-actuality of the new world) in terms of affirming that “it is only through this mortal threat that we can envision a unified humanity” (2020,105).

Notes

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/09/conspiracies-covid-19-lab-false-pandemic>.
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/21/beijing-coronavirus-second-wave-virus-china>.
3. <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-what-impact-will-the-coronavirus-pandemic-have-on-atmospheric-co2>.

References

Aqeel, Hisham. 2020a. "Visiting Hegel at Dusk: A Conversation with Slavoj Žižek," *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture, and Society*. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08935696.2020.1750193>. Accessed June 20, 2020.

Badiou, Alain. 2020. On the Epidemic Situation. Available at: <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4608-on-the-epidemic-situation>. Accessed June 4, 2020

Badiou, Alain. 2008. *Conditions*, trans by S. Corcoran, London: Continuum.

Bratton, B. (2012). "Root the Earth: On Peak Oil Apophenia," in E. Keller, N. Masciandaro, and E. Thacker (eds.), *Leper Creativity: Cyclonopedia Symposium*, New York: Punctum Books.

Berardi, Franco. 2020. Diary of the psycho-deflation. Available at: <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4600-bifo-diary-of-the-psycho-deflation>. Accessed May 27, 2020.

Berardi, Franco. 2013. Accelerationism Questioned from the Point of View of the Body. Available at: <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/46/60080/accelerationism-questioned-from-the-point-of-view-of-the-body/>. Accessed May 27, 2020.

Bonneuil, Christophe, and Fressoz, Jean-Baptiste. 2016. *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, trans. by D. Fernbach, London and New York: Verso.

Colebrook, Claire. 2014. *Death of the Posthuman, Essays on Extinction, Vol. 1*. University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1994. *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by P. Patton, New York: Columbia University Press.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari, Felix. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. by B. Massumi, London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari, Felix. 1986. *Toward A Minor Literature*, trans. by D. Polan, London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix. 1983. *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. by R. Hurley, M. Seem, H. Lane, London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Duffy, Simon. 2006. *The Logic of Expression: Quality, Quantity, and Intensity in Spinoza, Hegel, and Deleuze*, England: Ashgate.

Fisher, Mark. 2009. *Capitalist Realism. Is there no alternative?* United Kingdom: Zero Books.

Hegel, G.W.F. 1977. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A.V. Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vidal, John. 2020. Tip of the iceberg: Is our destruction of nature responsible for Covid-19. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/18/tip-of-the-iceberg-is-our-destruction-of-nature-responsible-for-covid-19-aoe>. Accessed June 17, 2020.

Kant, Immanuel. 1987. *Critique of Judgment*, trans. by W.S. Pluhar, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.

Latour, Bruno. 2020. Is this a dress rehearsal? Available at: <https://critinq.wordpress.com/2020/03/26/is-this-a-dress-rehearsal/>. Accessed May 4, 2020.

Latour, Bruno. 2017. *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climate Regime*, trans. by C. Porter, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Lapoujade, David. 2017. *Aberrant Movements: The Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze*, trans. by J.D. Jordan, South Pasadena: Semiotext(e).

Lawlor, Leonard. 2008. "Following the Rats: Becoming-animal in Deleuze and Guattari." *SubStance*, 117 37(3): 169-187.

Lederberg, Joshua. 1993). "Virus and Humankind: Intracellular Symbiosis and Evolutionary Competition," In S. Morse (Ed.) *Emerging Viruses*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Peters, M., Jandric, P., and McLaren, P. (2020). "Viral Modernity: Epidemics, Infodemics, and the 'bioinformational paradigm,'" *Educational Philosophy and Theory*.

Searle, Adam and Turnbull, Jonathan. 2020. "Resurgent natures? More-than-human perspectives on Covid-19," *Dialogues in Human Geography* xx(x), 1-5.

Schelling, F.W.J. 2007. *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy. The Berlin Lectures*, trans. by B. Matthews, New York: State University of New York Press, Albany.

Schelling, F.W.J. 2006. *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. by J. Love and J. Schmidt, New York: State University of New York Press, Albany.

Schelling, F.W.J. 2004. *First Outline of A System of the Philosophy of Nature*, trans. by K.R. Peterson, New York: State University of New York Press, Albany.

Schelling, F.W.J. 1994. "System of Philosophy in General and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular (1804)," in T. Pfau (trans.), *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory: Three Essays by F.W.J. Schelling*, New York: State University of New York Press, Albany.

Schelling, F.W.J. 1980. "Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism," in F. Marti (trans.), *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays (1794-1896) (156-196)*, London: Associated University Press.

Sholtz, Janae. 2015. *The Invention of A People: Heidegger and Deleuze on Art and the Political*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Sloterdijk, Peter. 2014) *You Must Change Your Life: On Anthropotechnics*, trans. by W. Hoban, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Smith, Daniel W. 2001. "The doctrine of univocity: Deleuze's ontology of difference," in M. Bryden (ed.) *Deleuze and Religion*, London and New York: Routledge.

Snowden, Frank M. 2019. *Epidemics and Society: From Black Death to the Present*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Wahl, Francois. 2008. "Preface: The Subtractive," in S. Corcoran (trans.), *Conditions*. London: Continuum.

Zizek, Slavoj. 2020. *Pandemic! Covid-19 Shakes the World*, New York: OR Books.

Zizek, Slavoj. 2012. *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, London and New York: Verso.

Zizek, Slavoj. 2007. *The Invisible Remainder: On Schelling and Related Matters*, London and New York: Verso.