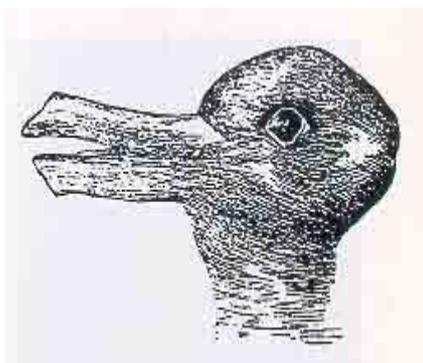


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## Žižek: silence and the real desert.

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Why would anyone read Žižek? Why should Žižek be compulsory reading in the minutes before an analyst arrives for their session? Because he writes in the kind of way that analysts should be able to think. As he says himself, where there are networks there is also the possibility of short-circuits – cutting across the network to create a spark. Not to be reductive as in the old IPA style, but to evoke, to provoke, to de-centre, to open up the space of a lack, not just for the sake of it, but because without it everything seems banal. Not only can one cross these synapses like a flash, but the reverse, there are pathways in the networking system that are blocked, where there is a parallax situation. What opens up, then, is an impossibility, an incommensurability.



Žižek explores these in his *magnum opus*, *The Parallax View*.<sup>1</sup> Parallax, put simply, is the apparent shift of an object against the background that is caused by a change in the observer's position. You are driving along a country road and stop. At this point the tree by the roadside is aligned from this perspective with a church in the background. Drive a little further and look back at the tree and it is aligned now with a

farm. Everything has remained the same except your position as observer. The two viewpoints are incompatible. The same holds true for Jastrow's duck-rabbit parallax, shown here, where one can see just the duck or the rabbit but not both at the same time. No mediation or synthesis is possible whereby one can see the duck and the rabbit simultaneously. They are on opposite sides of a Moebius strip and there is no possibility of a short-circuiting. The same problematic holds true for the wave/particle duality in physics. Electromagnetic waves "interfere" with each other very much like water waves creating peaks and troughs. However, with the discovery of the Photoelectric effect by Einstein in 1905, light must also be understood as tiny particles of energy called photons.

Against the New Age notion of opposites, polarities (*Yin* and *Yang*) that may dance and interact with each other, like some contemporary music to relax by that has no beginning or end, Žižek's work is based on what he claims is 'a strategic politico-philosophical decision' to outline and hold to the 'inherent "tension", gap, noncoincidence of the One with itself' (Žižek, 2006: 7). Further on he says, 'What if the actual problem is not to bridge the gap but, to *formulate* it as such, to conceive it properly?' (Ibid: 214). This is Žižek's position. This gap is the *parallax*. Žižek follows Lacan with "the lack" in being, and Freud with the conflict model of human desire: life versus death drives; unconscious/conscious and so on. He also states counterintuitively that the gap is essentially Hegelian, 'the opposites are not reconciled in a "higher synthesis" – rather *their differences are posited "as such"*' (Ibid: 299).

In this work he will outline the parallax view in relation to three key areas: the philosophical, the cognitivist brain sciences and the political. In each area he will set "cruel traps" for the progressivists: 'the usual gang of democracy-to-come-deconstructionist-postsecular-Levinasian-respect-for-Otherness suspects' (11). One parallax that should be pointed up at the beginning is that this Žižekian approach can be and is seen as deeply ironic, along the lines of Oscar Wilde's fear that people will not misunderstand him. Žižek can become the source of jokes himself, like Terry Eagleton's spoof: 'The crack between the herring and the side of the can, to put the matter in Hegelese, is actually a crack within the pickled herring itself. It is the way the pickled herring differs minimally from itself...'. Against this amusement, Žižek is the philosopher of the impenetrable Real and therefore implacable opponent of the political consensus and soft ideological forms. Žižek hits the spot. He writes from within the catastrophe. He lives the catastrophe.

However, the parallax is more than just a simple problem with perspective, there is the additional complication of one's subjective conditioning, the prejudices

with which we come to the “object”. This reaches its apogee with *l’objet petit á*, this ordinary object transformed into a special object, which is the cause upon which desire is focussed, the “strange attractor” around which desire turns. Žižek suggests that this is an exemplary parallax problem, of “pure” difference, where this unfathomable X, perceived to be “in” the object, cannot be pinned down to any particular properties of the object. As an example of this impossible X, he gives the Laplanchean gloss on Freud’s seduction theory. From one perspective, there is the brutal real of adult seduction of the helpless child leading to sometimes severe adult pathologies. From the more nuanced psychoanalytic perspective, there is the whole problematic of the child’s sexual *fantasies*. Laplanche points out that seduction cannot be (and never was merely) reduced to infantile fantasies by Freud, but always represents a traumatic encounter with the Other’s “enigmatic message”, the other’s unconscious sexual desire. Seduction can never be reduced to a simple event in the subject’s life. It is always somewhere “between” these two viewpoints, partly “real”, partly “fantasy”, always a “shock”, always a “too soon”, a Thing that cannot be wholly integrated into a narrative of meaning.

### **Basic antagonisms**

More generally, the foundational parallax concerns, on the one hand, the finite, phenomenal, ontic domain, the *not-All*, which parallels the infinite, noumenal, ontological domain of Being. We barred subjects exist in the void of the gap. And this gap is the seductive Real which anamorphotically distorts our perceptions of the “same” reality. This is what Žižek calls the “parallax Real”, as distinct from the standard Lacanian Real - ‘that which always returns to its place’ - the parallax real, represents the irreducible social antagonism, the ‘hard bone of contention which pulverises the sameness into a multitude of appearances’ (Ibid: 26). This is also the definition of post-modern relativism, ‘the thought of the irreducible *multiple of worlds*, each of them sustained by a specific language game, so that each world “is” the narrative its members are telling themselves about themselves, with no shared terrain, no common language between them’ (Ibid: 37). In this chaotic dissensus, there is no Master-Signifier or quilting point, or, in Bion’s terminology, “selected fact”, that will enable all the “facts” cohere in a new arrangement. Žižek mentions, as the exemplary Master-Signifier, the Nazi’s citing of the “Jewish plot”, as the master stroke that puts order on defeat, economic crisis and moral degeneracy in pre-War Germany.

Similarly, Žižek, via Kierkegaard, stresses the infinite gap between God and man. This gap parallels two incompatible notions of love: Christian love is love that *asks for nothing in return* and ambivalent love, of giving what one doesn't have. This *non-exchange* value of Christian love marks it out from the Symbolic, calculating, cost-benefit form of love – give *and* take. Christian love is *for nothing*, like Abraham's absolute willingness to sacrifice Isaac. 'A man is required to make the greatest possible sacrifice, to dedicate his whole life as a sacrifice – and wherefore?' (Ibid: 80). There is no guarantee, no value, nothing to be gained. Instead, a leap of faith is required, which tears through the Symbolic.

Levinas, however, distrusted psychoanalysis because of this ethical parallax question. Levinas cites, as a key reference, Vassily Grossman's book, *Life and Fate* (1995). Grossman is regarded as the first and the greatest of the dissidents of the post-Stalin era, who emerged from *within* Russia. Against progressivism, against scientific reason, Grossman pits human freedom, gratuitous giving, senseless kindness, which is unspoken for the most part and is not part of any *system* of Goodness and which goes unobserved and unrewarded.<sup>2</sup> It is, therefore, not part of any Symbolic or Imaginary register. It remains unknown and unheeded, and for that reason *specifically* and *uniquely* human, part of Levinas's ethics *as first philosophy*. Žižek asks, 'Is this not the lesson of Kierkegaard – that every translation of ethics into some positive universal frame already betrays the fundamental ethical Call, and thus necessarily gets entangled in inconsistencies [ideologies]? Is the only true ethical stance, therefore, the acceptance of this paradox and its challenge?' (Žižek 2006: 87). The religious sensibility cannot synthesise this parallax - 'the lack of a common measure, the insurmountable abyss between the Finite and the Infinite' (Ibid: 103).<sup>3</sup>

## **Silence**

With the radical lack of common measure, what good does speaking do? Speaking *in* the abyss, or, speaking which creates the abyss. 'I sensed an infinite scream passing through nature' writes Edvard Munch in his diary in 1892, about his iconic painting of the small asexual figure and his silent scream with his hands over his ears. Take this example of the logic of talking therapy.<sup>4</sup>

-You say a crime was committed against you and your family in Kosovo?

-Yes.

-In your own time, in your own words, can you tell me about the terrible incident(s)?

-(Head in hands) Silence.

Therapist waits. After repeated attempts....

-No. I can't speak about such terrible things. *Never. Never.*

-Okay. I understand. But when you do feel you can tell us, remember we are here to help and it will help you if you can share with us what happened.

-No. I can't speak. I can only hate... those fucking animals, those murdering bastards...

For Steiner, language is primarily utterance and the *Urnatur* of language is silence: the silence that antedates speech, before speech emerges with the hominid brain's explosive development; the silence that surrounds all speaking; the Holocaustal silence of the "Night of the world". For Žižek, however, 'The primordial fact is not silence (waiting to be broken by the divine word) but noise, the confused murmur of the Real'. The question then becomes how a space of silence can open up, as there can be no speech without this background of silence;<sup>5</sup> 'as Heidegger knew, all speech answers the "sound of silence"' (Žižek 2006: 154). Work is needed to open up a clearing in which words can be spoken, the same way as Lacan has suggested the vase or vaulted architecture creates a central void. Similarly, the potential space or "transitional space" guaranteed by the analyst represents this clearing in which words can be spoken. Žižek cites the Argentinian writer, Alejandra Pizarnik – 'Everything makes love with silence...

a poem buried in  
the silence of things  
you speak to ignore me  
far beyond any forbidden zone  
is a mirror for our sad reflections.  
This song of regret, alert, behind my poems:  
This song denies me, chokes my voice.

Žižek reads this, 'mirror for our sad reflections...far beyond...this song [of silence] denies me, chokes my voice', as the terrifying noumenal domain of the Real, 'in which a kind of "objective" truth (or rather, a *totally objectifying knowledge*) about me is inscribed' (Ibid: 155, my emphasis).

Žižek recalls *The Matrix*, where the Cipher, the traitor, the secret agent of the Matrix among the rebels (located in reality himself) kills one rebel after another by unplugging them from the virtual world *which they take for real*, plunging them into

the “desert of the Real”. They therefore die in *both* worlds.

Žižek calls his small volume, published by Verso, along with contributions from Paul Virilio and Jean Baudrillard to commemorate the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*.

the material reality we experience and see all around us is a virtual one, generated and co-ordinated by a gigantic mega-computer to which we are all attached; when the hero (Keanu Reeves) awakens to this “real reality” reality, he sees a desolate landscape littered with burnt-out ruins – what remains of Chicago after the global war. The resistance leader Morpheus, utters the ironic greeting: “Welcome to the desert of the real”. (Žižek 2002: 15)

The Real which “returns”, does so as yet another semblance or phantasy, as a horrendous apparition which is so traumatic and intrusive (maybe “objective”) that it *cannot* be integrated into our meaningful symbolic universe, the coordinates of which are forever changed.

This objective Real, or “totally objectifying knowledge”, which, by definition, is clearly not *our* knowledge, ‘chokes our voice’. For example, consider the parallax difference, from, 1) the perspective of the patient told the objectifying knowledge that she will die within weeks from a newly discovered cancer, and, 2), from the perspective of the oncologist who gives the diagnosis before going for his round of golf. Martin Amis’s (1997) heroin, astrophysicist Jennifer Rockwell, kills herself when she realises the enormity of the universe in its glacial empty objectivity. Julie Vignon de Courcy (Juliette Binoche), in Krzysztof Kieslowski’s film, *Blue*, is the lone survivor in a car accident that killed outright her husband, a renowned composer, and their young daughter. The fatal crash happened on a country road when the family car smashed into a tree, at the precise moment that the father was telling a joke, without getting his usual chance to repeat the punch line. What we are struck by seconds after the accident is the absolutely “objective” silence at the scene.

### **Being no one**

Žižek follows a number of contemporary authors on this key mind-body parallax: apparently encountering *someone* when we look into their eyes, versus, the brute biological fact that there is no one in the brain tissue. ‘You look down into an open head, watching the brain pulsate, watching the surgeon tug and probe, and you understand with absolute conviction that there is nothing more to it. There’s no one there’ (Metzinger, cited in Žižek 2006: 163). Just as in Plato’s famous cave, there is

no overall observing subject, but just a procession of shadows and their interplay. This, at least, is the well worn post-modern view of the subject, that has come all the way (down) from the high Renaissance estimation of man at the pinnacle of creation, through Copernicus, Darwin, Freud, Marx and Nietzsche, to the 'emergence of the subject as pure immaterial void'(Žižek 2006: 164). However, the turn towards appearances, as such, with phenomenology (albeit *without* substantial realities "behind" them), notions such as autopoiesis, the "emerging properties" of systems, events e-venting themselves, self-organising phenomena, fluid-multiple-open, quantum phenomena and the autonomy of pure flux-events, the 'ontology of pure becoming', and so on, all part and parcel of the by now commonplace de-substantialised "reality", recover at least some ephemeral flickers of subjectivity *without depth*. Not non-all, but the maybe-not-quite-nothing of contemporary subjectivity.

However, subjectivity is further threatened by the encroachment of the brain-machine-interface: implants that can realise Orwellian thought control; the prospect of post-human "undead" virtual entities; the shift from hardware (brain) to software (mind), with the latter being able to detach from the former completely and enter the virtual. Of particular fascination is the "link" between brain chemistry and consciousness. Everything we experience has corresponding neurophysiological correlates. For instance, brain processes accompany intense religious experiences. However, the question of causality remains unresolved. Taking an ecstasy pill creates in the user a feeling of exuberant abundant love towards the other. How does this short-cut compare to a religious training and devotion over a lifetime that might produce similar oceanic experiences, "naturally"? Consider the dour father, melancholic most of his life, who, on his deathbed is given morphine to relieve pain and seems to his visiting son, as cheerful, good-humoured and loving, for the first time in his life. Does the morphine neurophysiologically and artificially transform the father on his deathbed into this "loving" man, or, does it merely facilitate a very moving loving last gesture ("choice") at the final moment, that was always hidden in this otherwise depressed man?<sup>6</sup>

Žižek cites John Taylor's "skating" analogy of consciousness (Taylor 2001: 37). Taylor understands consciousness as a relational phenomenon where past memories, representations, emotions are used to fill in and inform present sensory inputs, which triggers a host of related activities endowing the mental process with a 'seeming insubstantiality', which, at some critical point, 'lifts' the original input into a new arena, like the skater who having launched himself onto the ice glides off

effortlessly. Thus, consciousness emerges released from the “friction” of the pre-processing stages. This model accounts for properties like qualia, ineffability, transparency and intrinsicity. Consciousness floats free when the threshold is crossed. Therefore, there is no consciousness without *self*-consciousness. The “I” emerges as the self-relating interaction between present input and past, and what we can properly call “the self” is this escape into the fluid field of awareness and de-centring, creating the impossibility of the I’s immediate self-presence.

Consciousness spins off from the substrate that created it. ‘A new quasi-object thus emerges’ (Žižek 2006: 213), the final states of which involve “attractor nets” which attract initial activity to become similar to their own, but remain insubstantial as they were created, posited and generated by the very substrates which react and interact to them in endless feedback loops. So subject and object (attractor) are almost one; the minimal “gap” is also the programmed space for *freedom*.

There is no subject prior to neural activity; no top-down, only bottom-up. Žižek emphasises, ‘cognitive scientists repeat again and again how our mind does not possess a centralised control structure which runs top-down...it is rather a bricolage of multiple agents who collaborate bottom-up’ (Ibid: 241). The self is its own self-ing, unaware<sup>7</sup> of the steps towards its own emerging for very good evolutionary reasons to do with necessarily rapid autopoietic information processing. So when Žižek concludes that, ‘as true Freudians, we should reject the notion of “Me” as a substantial background of the ego’ (Ibid: 217), he is also following Lacan and indeed Winnicott, whose understanding of ‘aliveness’ is a similar process of emergence via relating and “primary illusionment” (Winnicott: 1971).<sup>8</sup>

We are thinking the unthinkable – a self-less world, of living as ‘being no one’ (Žižek 2006: 218), maybe forgetting that for two and a half millennia, Buddhist enlightenment has been practicing the assumption of non-being.<sup>9</sup> The old Cartesian consciousness of pure reflection that gets caught up by emotion as the price the mind has to pay for being embodied, has become consciousness emerging, ‘through the disturbance of the organism’s homeostasis, it “is” the very activity of dealing with disturbances’(Žižek 2006:223). For Damasio, for instance, ‘the core *you* is only born as the story is told, *within the very story itself*...You are the music while the music lasts’ (2000: 191). In the Lacanian sense, the subject is the ‘answer of the Real’ (Žižek 2006: 225). Žižek recalls the joke about the patient in a large hospital ward who complains to the doctor about constant noise and crying from the other patients. The doctor replies that nothing can be done to prevent these suffering people from expressing their despair, since they all know they are dying. The patient then asks

why they cannot be put in a separate room for the dying. And the doctor replies that this *is* the separate room for the dying.

However, Žižek believes that Damasio leaves out of consideration the ‘proper empty core of subjectivity’, radically exposed as it is, *not* to life-experience, but ‘affects: anxiety and horror. Anxiety as correlative to confronting the Void that forms the core of the subject; horror as the experience of disgusting life at its purest, “undead” life [the death drive]’ (Ibid: 227). When, for instance, the subject is violently attacked, the emotional response is such that the cortical areas of the brain focus on the stimulus and inhibit interest in sex and food. Such stressors have, over time, acted to accelerate the development of our cognitive and behavioural capacities, not least, our acquisition of language, “placed”, as it is between these higher capacities and our emotional sub-systems. Žižek wants to emphasise this structural “gap” in connectivity between cognitive systems and emotional abilities. This gap, or point of failure, where emotions lag behind cognition defines our *humanity*. It gives rise to the uniquely human emotions of anxiety, melancholy and love. Without it humans would be virtual machines.<sup>10</sup> As Žižek says, ‘Specifically “human” emotions (like anxiety) arise only when a human animal loses its emotional moorings in biological instincts, and this loss is supplemented [inadequately] by the symbolically regulated emotions *qua* man’s “second nature”’ (Ibid: 228).

Interestingly, music arises in this gap between speech, always remains limited to phenomenal representations, and the “deeper” Real of our noumenal Will. As Schopenhauer has stressed: music will survive at the end of the world. Žižek suggests that music expresses the ‘underlying “noumenal” flux of *jouissance* beyond linguistic meaningfulness...it is the inaccessible excess [“Night of the World”] which forms the very core of the subject’ (Ibid: 229-230).

## **Biopolitics**

The advent of biopolitical control and regulation – bureaucratic totalitarianism, the “administered world”, works as an ideological cover for the explosive nature of late, “end of history”, global capitalism with its continuous self-revolutionary effects. Similarly, risk aversion, fear of harassment, self-policing via diet, exercise, self-monitoring and so on, serve as a cover for excessive *jouissance* on the level of the individual. As Baudrillard admits, following the postmodern *doxa*, one no longer tries to overthrow the system, but does one’s best just to figure out its chaotic complexity and then enjoy it.

Žižek has a similar view. Against some (conservative) analysts, who would want to *re-Oedipalise* and reinvigorate the Symbolic,<sup>11</sup> he suggests instead that the task is, 'to fully assume the *non-existence* of the Other' (Ibid: 296). This assumption can be read in a number of ways. Most obviously: there is no Other of the Other: God is dead. For Vattimo (2004), for instance, the death of God means the death of any ultimate structures of value or belief. There is *no* objective foundation of meaning or worth, *no* secular accounts of the worth of human life. All value systems are simply interpretations – the making of meaning from within a particular cultural moment, lacking in any ultimate authority. The irony here is that such notions embrace and further the very decentralisation and chaos, the total freedom upon which capitalism depends for its full unfettered emergence. Secondly, the *non-existence of the Other*, should also be read in a Levinasian way: there is *no* other *qua* unique other, *no* neighbour in his absolute non-negotiable, irreducible nakedness; that is, there is *no* debt, nothing owing to him, no place for him in my (absolutely narcissistic) world. Thirdly, this assumption is reminiscent of IRA suspects brought before the British Crown legal system. They were obliged, by their own military code, *to refuse to recognise the jurisdiction of the court* (Other). As a consequence they *say nothing*. Finally, my declarative performative assumption that the big Other does not exist is an elemental gesture against the gaze of the big Other of omnipresent surveillance, part of the immense bureaucratising potential of the appropriately named IT industry, returning to its spying origins.

On one parallax view, capitalism, at the heart of its functioning, is continuously self-revolutionising creating unprecedented excess and perversion without limit. On the other parallax view, it perpetuates the ever finer logic of technological *domination*. These two perspectives, the economic and the political, are radically incompatible and antagonistic. No synthesis is possible, and, as with any parallax, we can only see *one* side at a time. For instance, we might celebrate the chaotic indeterminacy and autopoietic processes of capitalism and the creative emergence of decentralised decisions,<sup>12</sup> as an unprecedented success story which has seen incomes in some part of the world quadruple since World War Two; while *not* seeing this success story as 'the ideological mask of the unprecedented growth of [covert] state apparatuses and other forms of social and economic control and regulation' (Žižek 2006: 375). In the obverse, one might praise the new rational measures being taken trans-culturally to protect children, women, minorities, regulate business and the professions, the gathering of unprecedented data on health and spending choices, crime prevention and CCTV, etc., and support these biopolitical controls, while *not* seeing these meta-regulations as a spectral cover for the spread

of chaos, social breakdown, sexual perversion, sex and drug trafficking that the System inevitably generates, as by-product waste.

For Žižek, as for left-Lacanian more generally, the analyst's discourse should stand for,

[T]he emergence of revolutionary-emancipatory subjectivity that resolves the split into university [knowledge, domination, administration] and hysteria [chaotic excess]: in it, the revolutionary agent (a) addresses the subject from the position of knowledge which occupies the place of truth (that is, which intervenes at the "symptomal torsion" of the subject's constellation) and the goal is to isolate, get rid of, the Master Signifier which structured the subject's (ideologico-political) unconscious (Ibid: 298).

Tentatively, Žižek hints at new quilting points, new Master Signifiers, 'a new naming of our situation', beyond the crazy underminings caused not so much by revolutionaries but by capitalism itself! However, is this not precisely what capitalism requires and has succeeded in causing: namely total and constant renewal, the process of continuous becoming, undermining any ideological-political commitments in favour of the carnival? How can a "subject", so empty, so ephemeral, so contingent and light, within a system that both mirrors and creates it, be committed to anything for long enough to effect any change?

The ironies of the post-'68 rush to *jouissance*, was never going to be too far from the consumption of an endless supply of new products promising *jouissance*, up to and including the 'autistic-masturbatory "asocial" *jouissance* whose supreme case is drug addiction...a commodity *par excellence*' (Ibid: 311).<sup>13</sup> The fall-out from this virtual revolution was the emergence of the *real* desert of the social in three key respects: social breakdown; terrorism; the turn inwards towards mysticism and drug states. What all three represent is 'a withdrawal from concrete socio-political engagement into a direct contact with the Real' (Ibid). And there is a sense that all three retreats are increasing at the same time as capitalism itself spirals onwards. And the Left today is caught between cautious reformism and revolutionary despair. Or as one disillusioned Lacanian colleague joked about Lacanian analysts, 'they are just armchair revolutionaries'.

Another parallax concerns the Law itself. State power represents the interests of its subjects. It serves them, is answerable to them and is subject to their control. This is the official widely held democratic position. A slight shift in the parallax position reveals power's 'obscene superego supplement' to the Law, always present but normally hidden. It emerges when the State is bombarded by impossible demands, from, for instance, anti-globalisation protesters. What transpires then

seems more like the unconditional exercise of power: 'law does not bind me, I can do whatever I like with you. I can treat you as guilty if I decide to, I can destroy you if I want to...' (Ibid: 337).<sup>14</sup> Power posits itself as rational, but always relies on the obscene stain of hidden violence. The best example of this parallax comes from a rather unlikely source, namely the power of abortion.<sup>15</sup>

For Žižek, opposing the Law via direct action, what he calls 'the *rumspringa* of resistance' only reinforces the System through our robust participation within it. *Rumspringa* refers to the "running around" of Amish youth, permitted experimentation and transgression for a brief time before they either, re-enter their strict community as evermore committed members, or leave altogether. Žižek is also against humanitarian aid, giving to charities to support orphans in Africa, opposing oil drilling in a wide-life area, presumably buying fair trade coffee, ethical products, or supporting feminists in Muslim countries, and so on. All the things that make well educated middle class people feel that they are doing "their bit" with their little *rumspringa*, before they revert to their normal lives. He is also against the by now standard response of dis-identifying with the system - I know it's all a game - while participating fully within it. Or, more radically, going to California or Thailand to meditate, Zen-style, for a week or for a year – maybe the ultimate self-absorption in the guise of pan-spiritual withdrawal.

What Žižek wants to explore is a "new space" *outside* the hegemonic position and its mirroring negation - the Heideggerian sense of a clearing, the opening up of a place, 'through a gesture which is thoroughly violent in its impassive refusal...to quote Mallarmé – nothing will have taken place but the place itself' (Ibid: 381). This gesture is *no-thing*. It is the 'immanent difference, gap, between this [everyday] reality and its own void; that is to discern the void that separates material reality *from itself*, that makes it "non-all"' (Ibid: 383).

A Lacanian joke: A man who believes himself to be a grain of seed is taken to a mental hospital where the doctors work hard to convince him that he is a man. However, when he is cured and now believes that he is a man and not a grain of seed, he is allowed to leave the hospital and live as a normal man. He is outside the front door of the hospital and comes rushing back in trembling and scared. There was a chicken outside the door. The doctor tells him, 'Look you know that you are not a grain of seed but a man'. 'I know that full well', says the patient, 'but does the Chicken?' It is a question then of my knowledge of and my beliefs about myself, and the Other's knowledge, which can be a shock or even traumatic. My knowledge and the Other's can act as a parallax. One never knows what the Other is thinking! The Other might decide to 'play the man rather than the ball'.<sup>16</sup> The Other always has

ironic effects, disorienting or negating effects. The best one can hope for is just this “new space”. Žižek puts the death drive to use here in the “clearing” process. *For a moment or more, the subject is free from subjection to the Other.* However, in a revolutionary atmosphere a new more severe Master will be taken on.<sup>17</sup>

For Baudrillard, the world *in itself* is already radical otherness, for which there is *no* equivalent and *no* exchange. Its absolute strangeness is seduction. Our problem is not the “forced choice” of castration and meaning, but being separated from our capacity for seduction. For Baudrillard, seduction precedes production in all its (capitalist-revolutionary-Other) forms. Here is a delightful passage from Baudrillard’s *Cool Memories IV*.

The one fantastic moment is that moment of first contact, when things have not yet noticed we are there, when they have not yet fallen in with the order of analysis. It is the same with language when it has not yet had time to signify. Or with deserts: when their silence is still intact and our absence has not had time to dissipate...But that instant is ephemeral; it is gone in a trice. You would have not to be there to see it. Perhaps only ghosts experience that exceptional pleasure. (2003/2001: 52)

He speaks of the unsullied moment prior to representation and evaporation via the symbolic; the world before the banality of human contagion; language when it is still just materiality, before meaning. The key point is *our absence and the generosity of the world without us.* Against the unifying tendency of “one world”, technological synthesis and the reconciliation of all, Baudrillard advocates, ‘the dual form, irrevocable divergence. Against all that is striving to reconcile the antagonistic terms: maintain impossible exchange, play on the very impossibility of that exchange, play on that tension and dual form, which nothing escapes, but everything opposes’ (Baudrillard 2001/1999: 79).<sup>18</sup>

However, for Žižek, what releases us from enslavement to the Other is the “ethical act”, whereby the subject reverses the “forced choice” of the Oedipal era, when he was forced to choose between the Symbolic universe and the real seduction of psychosis. At this point of reversal – a repetition of the original “choice” in reverse - he is effectively and momentarily “free”, provided the Act does not lead to suicide. There is a correspondence here with Kierkegaard’s interest in Christ’s exemplary Act which challenged the hegemonic Jewish law. For Kierkegaard, the religious is a singular, exceptional moment, over and against the universalisation of the Christian ethical (moral) code. For Žižek, the death drive is not the blind will to self-destruction of popular imaginings, but the violent energy required for the (revolutionary) Act-Event – to blast a way back through the ontological blockage. These point-

Singularities of freedom, however, are inevitably taken up into the Symbolic and lose their revelatory (counter-) power. Christianity, in its most radical and allegedly revolutionary origins, belongs to the realm of ethics in the Lacanian senseless-sense, undercutting and subverting morality. Lacanian analysis is to the IPA, the old psychoanalytic establishment, what radical New Testament Christianity is to the Old Testament and the Christian churches, only more so.

Lacanian analysis is at the sophisticated end of a spectrum of radical analysis that began with the Reichians between the wars. Unlike Freud, who regarded neurosis as a condition of civilisation,<sup>19</sup> the radicals were utopians. Radicalism continued with the hugely influential Frankfurt School and the groundbreaking work, *The Authoritarian Personality* in 1950. Lacanian ethics places no limits on desire and resists any universalisation – *have you acted in conformity with the desire that is in you?* (Lacan 1992/1986: 314). But Lacan says, ‘whoever enters the path of uninhibited *jouissance*, in the name of the rejection of the moral law in some form or other, encounters obstacles whose power is revealed to us everyday innumerable forms...’ (Ibid: 177). So Lacan’s position is more nuanced, closer to Freud, being both anti-current orthodoxy and anti-utopian simultaneously.

When Lacan famously suggested that, ‘*From an analytic point of view, the only thing one can be guilty of is having given ground relative to one’s desire*’ (Ibid: 319), there are a number of contradictory meanings that are possible. This is not simply the trite Marcusean slogan ‘to get rid of the policeman in your head’, on the contrary, guilt is an ever-present register. It might also mean, *resistance* to the superego *compulsion to enjoy*. It is the freedom *not* to do what you (impulsively) want to do, to not just give way to consumerist pressure, for instance, or another drink. Or the freedom to do what you don’t want to do, voluntarily. The choice is yours – absolutely - and in no way belongs to the realm of the Other’s desire. This “total” freedom is the key trope of Lacanian psychoanalysis.<sup>20</sup> One could envisage the difference between Anglo-American psychoanalysis and the radical Lacanians, in the following way. The former are like the contemporary Third Way Left – all about state control and the analyst (who will soon be a registered State-analyst!) knowing what is best for the patient in terms of health and mental hygiene. While the latter present a radical free-market approach to desire, unfettered and answerable to no one if the Other doesn’t exist! Similarly, the former analysand, like the functionary in a state enterprise, often has little interest-desire in his analytic work of good health, while the latter, working for himself and his own enterprise has everything at stake in his desire, even the possibility of losing everything, like Antigone determined to bury Polynices at the risk of sacrificing her own life.

The radical Lacanian dream, like former radicals in the movement is to overcome the Pauline split introduced by the Law – Kant *with* Sade – to overcome, as it were, the ‘fear of freedom’, the title of Erich Fromm’s influential book, to relinquish the (neurotic) need for a Master. The problem is, however, that a truly free, sublime Act is unbearable, because all too Real. On the side of Kant it is a pure *jouissance* of the Law; on the side of Sade, pure *jouissance* of desire and violence. In either, the abolition in the Act, of Symbolic space, re-emerges in the Symbolic as “pathological” extremism and becomes subject to a vulgar psychoanalytic explanation, rather than a free Act.

For Lacan, post-Kant, there can be no turning back; a breach has opened up in the history of ethics that cannot be closed over – ‘the cage broken open’ (Nietzsche). The disinterested autonomy of Reason meets total objective indulgence of cruelty, almost two centuries before Auschwitz. Recall Arendt reminded us that Eichmann was a strict Kantian before he substituted Hitler’s command in place of the categorical imperative. By creating such a scandalous, diabolical sublime equality between extreme good and extreme evil, Lacan has managed, at a stroke, to create an equally extreme indifference to any moral outcomes which becomes today’s post-modern moral equivalence. Nothing matters. Hence the “post” in post-modern, post-human, post-political, etc., - post any system of values. And likewise all those books during the millenium with the title, “*End of...*”. Kantian law, according to Lacan, ‘is simply desire in its pure state, that very desire that culminates in the sacrifice, strictly speaking, of *everything* that is the object of love in one’s human tenderness...’ (Lacan 1977/1973: 275-6).<sup>21</sup>

However, the opposing extremes of Kant’s eithics and Sade’s anti-ethics are *not* total. By introducing a hint of a gap in the ethical imperative between the ultimate “must” and more equivocal “ought” of an unrealisable ideal-duty, Kant is acknowledging that evil cannot be abolished. Similarly, Sade’s “evil” still retains more than a hint of a transgressive element encouraging us to take pleasure in the cold destruction of morality. For this reason, Žižek disagrees with Lacan, when Lacan alleges that Sade is “the truth” of Kant, that Sadian perversion is more complete. ‘On the contrary’, says Žižek, ‘the Sadian perversion emerges as the result of the Kantian compromise, of Kant’s avoiding the consequences of his breakthrough. Sade is a *symptom* of Kant’ (Žižek 2006: 96). It is only later in *Seminar XXIII*, that Lacan will conclude that *jouissance* is *not* a total Thing-in-itself beyond the Symbolic. *Jouissance* arises precisely as a *failure* to reach its total (mythical) goal of satisfaction and ends up finitely circulating repetitively around the goal, which, as

such, defines the *drive*. 'If he is to follow the path of pleasure, man must go round it' (Lacan 1992/1986: 95).

Another parallax opens here about a Lacanian analysis, as such: from one side it has indeed an ethical outcome to do with one's relation to *jouissance* as an absolute challenge and total resistance to the big Other; from the opposite view, it represents itself as the smart, cool, elite form of narcissistic investment entirely fitted for an atomised society.<sup>23</sup> Even Žižek himself seems inclined to this latter view! Responding to Miller's public letter to Bernard Accoyer, the French *depute*, responsible for the legal regulation of psychoanalysis, contemporary analysts, Žižek claims, function as a 'mental repair service, providing ersatz identifications...an exemplary case of conceding the terrain in advance to the enemy...'. Žižek longs for 'Lacan's old arrogant "elitism"', which was not prepared to do business with the ruling ideology. Whereas today, seeking legitimacy, 'psychoanalysts are thus described as profiting from today's "disarray of identifications": the more serious the crisis, the more business there is for them!' (Žižek 2006: 261).

Žižek believes Lacanians have lost their 'sociopolitical critical edge'. Lacan, per se, was never explicitly political and revolutionary. He was first and foremost a psychoanalyst. However, his legendary and relentless critique of American ego-psychology can be seen in quasi-political terms as an attack on American capitalism, most notably in the 1953 Rome Discourse. Clearly, there is a link between Lacan's notion of *jouissance*, "surplus enjoyment" and the Marxist theory of "surplus value", placing enjoyment, as such, at the heart of the capitalist order. And although his name is still linked with the events of May '68, he even met Daniel Cohn-Bendit, his warning about the students' aspiration for a new Master discourse, stand-out as being the most memorable. What marks out Lacan, politically, is his radical anti-utopianism. As Stavrakakis quips, 'In true Lacanian style, one could even declare that "the Lacanian left" does not exist!' (2008: 4). By which he means, there is no totality on the Lacanian Left, but rather, in this absence a significant trend is developing in Cultural Theory – *The Politics of Lack* - with Lacan at the epicentre. At varying distances from this epicentre are, for instance, Butler and Castoriadis at the furthest distance, Laclau and Mouffe, then Badiou, to whom reference is made below. However, this perspective of lack is controversial. Acknowledging that, 'It has almost invisibly gained a foothold in theoretical literature', Robinson concedes that, 'This is at least partly due to its radical pretensions', but continues, 'It is, however, crucial to challenge it, because its [a-]political effects are to paralyse "radical" theory. It provides a very weak basis for any kind of politics, and certainly no basis for a radical or transformative agenda' (Robinson 2005: unpaginated). Every way we turn,

the signifier is, “impossibility”. The lack operates as a mythical essence in Lacanian analysis, giving rise to the foundational inevitability of the parallax examples we are discussing.

In apparent contrast, Žižek argues for a violent transformative agenda. Žižek’s Act is to write: to smash by writing; to create short-circuits and strict antinomies. He favours *inhuman* rights: ‘we should directly admit revolutionary violence as a liberating end in itself’ (Žižek 2006: 380).<sup>24</sup> However, it should occur to us, in passing, that such revolutionary gestures should come under the same strict warning that Lacan gave the aforementioned Paris students ‘As hysterics, you want a new Master. You will get one’. Žižek is aware of the problem, but still follows Badiou favouring the revolutionary violence of, for instance, the exemplary Chinese legalists, the Jacobins, Lenin and Mao, who between them have been responsible for the deaths of countless millions. He favours, ‘The community of believers *qua* “uncoupled” outcasts from the social order - with, ideally, authentic psychoanalytic and revolutionary collectives as its two main forms’ (Žižek 2000: 160).<sup>38</sup>

The most radical parallax is formulated thus: ‘the pacifying God of Love is not the opposite of the vengeful Jehovah, but his other face’ (Žižek 2006: 280). We can never “understand”, as such, “violence as the work of love”, the words of Luke 14:26 – *if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and his mother, his brothers and his sisters – yes even his own life – he cannot be my disciple*, and, on the other hand, the absolutely senseless *passivity* of Christ on the Cross. Although, it should be noted, *no* violence is ever advocated in the New Testament. Quite the opposite, violent Acts, done by “fundamentalists”, who have come suddenly, as it were, to *know directly, totally and absolutely*, emerge from the Real, seizing the moment, like the epochal Event of the October Revolution. Acts done, by *limited* human subjects, are open to the most monstrous abuses and the greatest tragic consequences sometimes affecting whole continents, causing immiseration for decades.

Here is an exemplary (radical, revolutionary, Lacanian-ethical) Act, the ‘leap of faith’ and the *step outside* the global circuit, a well known incident from the Vietnam war:

[A]fter the US Army occupied a local village, their doctors vaccinated the children on the left arm in order to demonstrate their humanitarian care; when, the day after, the village was retaken by the Vietcong, they cut off the left arms of all the vaccinated children. . . Although it is difficult to sustain as a literal model to follow, this complete rejection of the enemy precisely in its caring ‘humanitarian’ aspect, no matter what the cost, has to be endorsed in its basic intention (Žižek 2004: 83).

Although, Oliver Marchant, criticises this example, as ‘difficult to sustain for an emancipatory project of the Left’, with its absolute rejection of the enemy, and its ‘sanitary effort at purification’, that might, ‘serve as a generalizable recommendation... and, in the last instance extermination’ (Marchant 2007: 110), criticism here is really only one of tactics for the revolutionary Left. There is absolutely no mention or no criticism of the barbarity of the Vietcong in their “counter-vaccination” anti-American programme. As far as they are concerned, the Vietcong were acting ethically in their total break with the enemy. Similarly, in Iraq, they would see the counter-insurgency Acts of suicide bombing innocent civilians and children at random, ‘although difficult to sustain’, as ethical nevertheless.

However, as always the margins are interesting! Those little hesitations, doubts (‘difficult to sustain’) might mark these intellectual theorists out, ominously, why not, for Badiou’s third moment of “revolutionary justice” – ‘egalitarian justice’ and its ‘*immediate brutal imposition*, with no understanding of the “complex circumstances”’ (Žižek 2006: 379, emphasis added) – maybe the gulag or worse. How many intellectuals have been in receipt of such *Real* Love-violence – the ‘obscene stain’ of revolutionary power? As Lenin put it succinctly: ‘Intellectuals are lackeys of capitalism, who think they are the brains of the nation. They are not the brains of the nation. They’re its shit’ (Cited in Amis 2002: 15).<sup>27</sup>

‘Could my former comrades’, asks Azar Nafisi in relation to the Iranian Revolution, ‘have predicted that one day they would be tried in a Revolutionary Court, tortured and killed as traitors and spies? ...not in their wildest dreams’ (Nafisi 2003: 115). Could Orwell have imagined that, ‘scores of thousands of working class people, including eight or ten thousand soldiers who were freezing in the front-line trenches and hundreds of foreigners who had come to Spain to fight against fascism, often sacrificing their livelihood and nationality by doing so, were simply traitors in the pay of the enemy’?<sup>28</sup> These lies were spread all over Spain by posters and repeated all over the world by the pro-Communist press. Total betrayal. Orwell himself narrowly escaped death as he was shot through the neck from a Fascist position. POUM members were imprisoned, tortured and shot (Orwell 1938: 207).

Žižek’s uncompromising, ‘passion for the Real’, clears a space for radical “freedom”, violent transgression. Not for him a safe government position in the newly emerging Slovenian state in the early 1990s. He says, ‘the notion of serving as a Minister of culture, education or science seemed to be utterly ridiculous, not even worth consideration’ (Žižek 2002: 6). The casual, sweeping dismissal of any working *within* the System shows just how indiscriminate is Žižek’s nihilation of *any* System

qua liberal-Capitalist System. None it appears is better than any other, even a state, his own people, freeing themselves from totalitarianism.

Maybe, the best example to hand of Badiou's *second* revolutionary moment, "terror", remains with Pol Pot. This is the utterly banal version of "clearing", "through a gesture which is thoroughly violent": clearing of time (year zero); clearing money (currency abolished); culture (markets, schools, newspapers, religious practices and private property are outlawed); people (public servants, police, military officers, teachers, ethnic Vietnamese, Christian clergy, Muslim leaders, members of the Cham Muslim minority, members of the middle-class and the educated are identified and executed).

Welcome to silence and the real desert. Not the silence of our absence, but the Holocaustal silence brought about by our monstrous presence, monstrous Acts and the obscene stain of revolutionary power.

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## Notes

1. Žižek, S. (2006) *The Parallax View*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. All subsequent page numbers in brackets are referring to this work. While this paper focuses on this volume in particular, it does not constitute a review.
2. What stand out for Levinas are, 'scenes of goodness in an inhuman world...*exterior to all system*', (see Levinas 2001: 81), where, 'the human [*qua* human] pierces the crust of being', (Ibid: 90), 'where goodness escapes every ideology...goodness *without* thinking'. (Ibid: 217). Grossman is clear. He describes the uniformity of the wooden barrack huts in the Russian camp: 'Everything that lives is unique...If you attempt to erase the peculiarities and individuality of life by violence, then life itself must suffocate' (Grossman 1995: 19). Grossman privileges, simple human devotion, like Lyudmila's grief for her illegitimate son, Tolya, killed as a boy in the war, at his simple graveside by the rows of wooden crosses, talking to him in a delirium of grief all the cold night. 'Nothing matters to her; there was nothing she needed. All that existed was some agonising force that was crushing her heart' (Ibid, p154).
3. We will return to the ethical question in relation to political action later in this paper. Levinas has been criticised for ignoring the *finite* specificities of ethics. The same criticism could be levelled at Žižek who favours revolutionary love against the finite reformism of the non-revolutionary Left.
4. Taken from a conference on psychotherapy and international conflict.
5. One wonders, in passing, about *this* silence, described by W. G. Sebald in his book *On the Natural History of Destruction*, the title of which is taken from an article written by Solly Zuckerman for a journal called *Horizon*, after he had visited the city of Cologne ravaged by allied bombing. Sebald's question was about the strange silence that surrounded the mass destruction of 131

German cities, the death of over 600,000 civilians, in the Allied bombings. This was destruction on a scale without historical precedent, which 'seems to have left scarcely a trace of pain behind in the collective consciousness' (Sebald: 4). It is as if what he calls, 'the true state of material and moral ruin in which the country found itself' became taboo, a 'shameful family secret' (Ibid: 10).

6. Of course, we would love the latter instances to be true to keep our world of meaning intact. And as psychoanalysts, we comfort ourselves with the rather smug illusion that positivistic science and neuroscience can *never* fully account for "our" field of human subjectivity and the "essence" of man. The image of human dignity will survive unscathed! And furthermore, as Žižek indicates, when thinking about the excitement around "neuro-psychoanalysis" there is a sense of "if you can't beat them join them"! However, the position of psychoanalysis is looking increasingly precarious, as subjectivity is further "emptied", becoming a mere "user illusion" (2006: 174)
7. Just as the eye sees without seeing itself seeing. The transparency of perception belies the opacity of the *means* of perception. What we see, out there, is really opaquely generated by a tiny flickering image, which is a little different on each retina. The inputs are synthesised by the visual cortex and projected back onto external objects with the added bonus of depth vision.
8. For Winnicott, emergence is what happens in groups as well as neural networks. Recently, I was asked to give a (top-down) talk/lecture on Projective Identification to a group of post-graduate students studying on a group training course. We duly sat in a circle and I gave my talk in which, at one point, I gave some graphic vignettes of *violent* projective identification. The reaction of some of the students was to question *why* I had used these violent examples. The switch was from manifest *content* to latent *process*. So I became absorbed in the emerging *group process of becoming* - to do with affect rather than content.
9. How do we get from passive primary illusionment, or the assumption of "non-being" to something more active to do with subjectivity? Or, how does *self-consciousness* arise amidst and minimally separate from overwhelming billions of neural data? The answer seems to be, not so much "spontaneously", but by some process of negation or by some malfunction or fault in the nature of reality, otherwise we would be no more than passive thinking machines. It is as if we stumble into self-consciousness through an "ontological crack" (Žižek 2006: 242) in "reality" itself, which enables us to say: *yes, I am here*, over and against being a passive (unconscious) recipient of neuronal impulses. Žižek dramatises this crack by reference to 'a traumatic excess'. Here again, through this margin of "error" that enables us to be, is our measure of freedom.
10. We already have "human" prototypes of these virtual machine humanoids when operators serving the public, officials, of any kind especially politicians, speak from protocols that have been fine-tuned to deal with "difficult" clients. Here there is no lag in "communication" and the same formulation is repeated over and over again, creating a machine-like response *without this all important human gap*.

11. At one point, however, Žižek himself suggests that, 'we should ...elevate the unfortunate "Oedipus Complex" to the dignity of ontology' (Žižek 2006: 405). And with the contemporary mass absence of fathering one can sympathise with this view. Other reactions of the psychoanalytic establishment to the contemporary crisis are, 1) disavowal: act as if nothing has really changed. The unconscious remains more or less as Freud described it. 2) Acknowledge the realities of borderline and narcissistic personality disorders and modify technique accordingly. 3) Search for new legitimization via the neurosciences and neuropsychanalysis. 4) Seek a rapprochement with Jung, New Age holism and Zen practices.
12. No coincidence, of course, that the same terms are currently used to structure ideas about modern subjectivity *and* contemporary capitalism.
13. And everywhere, one hears the call for drug legalisation.
14. The Irish Revenue, which is currently investigating 2,000 overseas property transactions by Irish residents, claims that it lacks the legal powers to pursue its tax inquiries thoroughly. And new Revenue Commissioners' chairwoman Josephine Feehily has said she will ask the Government to change the law to compel Irish estate agents to release details of foreign property purchases by Irish residents. The law is operating at the level of reason and fairness respecting human rights. It is entirely fair that Revenue should be able to track down possible tax defaulters who may have stashed money away in foreign destinations. But there is another level, a secret (unconscious) perverse supplement to the law, a superego of enjoyment, quite outside and hidden from its official claims. This was Kafka's world. You could almost hear it in the cold determined voice of the chairwoman herself when interviewed by RTE radio recently. This voice says, without saying: 'I take pleasure in my power over you and I can do what I like with you and you can do nothing about it'. The same secret perverse supplement is at work one suspects when the police "interview" suspects, or chase them in high speed vehicles like boy-racers. However, what Žižek does not point up are the *differences between* legal systems and their execution of the Law. In China currently, tax defaulter are shot; there is no phoning your local radio station chat show to complain.
15. May 21st 2008: 'We have in this country [Britain] at the moment a situation in which you can have two children, of exactly the same age and gestation, and one is in a cot with all the resources of medical science being poured into saving it and the other is quite deliberately being taken from the womb and destroyed'. British MPs vote to retain the 24 week limit for abortions. Marie Stopes International said it was "reassuring" that a majority of MPs were wise to what it called an emotive and misleading campaign to chip away at women's reproductive rights and had disregarded it in exercising their votes. The women's "right to choose" contains keys words, "right" and "choose", two Master Signifiers of modern liberal democracies. What could be more reasonable and civilised more than 40 years after abortion was legalised? The obscene supplement to this exemplary human right is absolutely transparent: the death of a potentially viable foetus-infant. A parallax indeed.
16. This is the whole secret basis of psychoanalysis – playing the man rather than the ball, you may mean this, but you are really saying this. It is the opposite of the Catholic notion of hating the sin and loving the sinner; in psychoanalysis we welcome the sin and hate the sinner. And this is why we might properly

hate and reject psychoanalysis. What is the secret supplement-stain of psychoanalysis? Is this question ever asked?

17. What should we make of those young Lacanians going from Ireland, for instance, to their Lacanian analysts in France, at great expense often for many years (some say 15 years)? What new mastery is involved? What cause could be so important?
18. The dualistic form is the parallax.
19. Lacan acknowledges that for Freud, 'if we continue to follow Freud in a text such as *Civilisation and Its Discontents* we cannot avoid the formula that *jouissance* is evil...He wrote *Civilisation and Its Discontents* to tell us this' (Lacan 1992/1986: 184)
20. But it is precisely this kind of paradoxical freedom: *Your money or your life*. A parallax indeed: your money OR your life: never *both*. No wonder the Irishman when he was asked this question said – don't rush me, I haven't made up my mind yet!
21. Clearly the break with any notion whatsoever of human sentiment and sympathy is done with in this formulation. However, this is merely the structural opposite of the Anglo-American emphasis on the mother. It makes the same mistake *in reverse*.
22. Seminar VII op. cit. p95.
23. In this respect, it is not surprising to discover that the discourse of the analyst is the same formula as the discourse of perversion! (a<>\$) The difference lies solely in the ambiguity that surrounds *objet-a*; on the one hand, it is the lure-screen for enjoyment (perversion) and on the other, the void, which endlessly provokes the subject to find the truth of his desire. In practice, the two get confused as when an "analyst" seduces an analysand. And if we follow Laplanche in this respect (leave aside Baudrillard), when do this *not* happen!
24. What is the difference between "creative" violence and what Žižek himself describes as "Id-evil", skinhead random violence; between *Krystallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass) and Stalingrad? How, for instance, should one evaluate the following? 'A well known Slovene Catholic intellectual, ex-Minister of Culture and ex-Slovenian ambassador to France, recently wrote, *apropos* of Derrida: "the only weapon is rebellion and destruction, as the recently deceased apostle Jacques Derrida taught us. Whenever you see a window, throw a brick into it. Where there is a building, there must be a mine. Where there is a high-rise building Bin Laden should come. Where there is any kind of institution, law or link, one should find a falsification, a 'law' of the street or of the underground". Incidentally, Žižek quips that *Where there is a high rise building Bin Laden should come*, sounds like Freud's *woe s war soll ich warden* (2006: 421). An "emancipatory" Act, or a sick joke? Žižek pleads context is all; by the fruits, we shall know them; are the Symbolic coordinates fundamentally changed? However, what is most significant is that we will not agree on any judgement. Just as when the Twin Towers were attacked some "intellectuals" made no secret of their jubilation.
25. How could the unambiguous term "authentic" have crept in here? He is advocating more than this. The forward at the front of this volume suggests:

'the explosive combination of Lacanian psychoanalysis and Marxist tradition detonates a dynamic freedom that enables us to question the very presuppositions of the circuit of Capital'.

26. 'At Beijing University during the "Cleansing the Class Ranks" campaign of 1968, suspect teachers were forced publicly to confess their "problems" and to denounce each other'. Many were driven to suicide, itself regarded as 'alienating oneself from the party and the people' (Ferguson 2006: 620).
27. Amis deals with this strange question of laughter that surrounds the Soviet experiment (quite unlike the Holocaust) and he quotes Nietzsche: 'A joke is an epigram on the death of a feeling,' if this is the case here, then, he says 'this *joke* is a massacre' (Amis 2002: 247).
28. Christopher Hitchens points out that 'the deliberate subversion of the Spanish Republic by the agents of Stalin' (Hitchens 2002: 48). Andres Nin, the founder of the POUM, was kidnapped, tortured and - refusing to crack - murdered. The Communist spokesman said he had fled to join the Nazis. Friends of Orwell, like George Kopp, whom Orwell tried in vain to get freed from jail, was tortured by confinement with rats, and other volunteers like Bob Smillie died of their treatment. Considering how the history of this period will be distorted, Orwell comments, 'The very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world'. (Ibid: 50).