



## Living in the End Times

*Slavoj Žižek*

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**Living in the End Times** Slavoj Žižek

**Žižek analyzes the end of the world at the hands of the “four riders of the apocalypse.”**

There should no longer be any doubt: global capitalism is fast approaching its terminal crisis. Slavoj Žižek has identified the four horsemen of this coming apocalypse: the worldwide ecological crisis; imbalances within the economic system; the biogenetic revolution; and exploding social divisions and ruptures. But, he asks, if the end of capitalism seems to many like the end of the world, how is it possible for Western society to face up to the end times? In a major new analysis of our global situation, Slavok Žižek argues that our collective responses to economic Armageddon correspond to the stages of grief: ideological denial, explosions of anger and attempts at bargaining, followed by depression and withdrawal.

After passing through this zero-point, we can begin to perceive the crisis as a chance for a new beginning. Or, as Mao Zedong put it, “There is great disorder under heaven, the situation is excellent.” Slavoj Žižek shows the cultural and political forms of these stages of ideological avoidance and political protest, from New Age obscurantism to violent religious fundamentalism. Concluding with a compelling argument for the return of a Marxian critique of political economy, Žižek also divines the wellsprings of a potentially communist culture—from literary utopias like Kafka’s community of mice to the collective of freak outcasts in the TV series *Heroes*.

## Living in the End Times Details

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# From Reader Review Living in the End Times for online ebook

**Jonfaith says**

**[T]he way to rid ourselves of our masters is not for humankind itself to become a collective master over nature, but to recognize the imposture in the very notion of the Master.**

Inexplicably the last week has been one of Žižek. I struggled, slipped and regrouped to push through Living in the End Times. I find it increasingly interesting that the Slovene so often adopts theological motifs especially towards a Marxist Future: one can almost sense a crescendo of trumpets. I'm not sure of much, but this is exhilarating reading except when broaching the nuances of either Lacan or Marx; it then becomes rather numbing. This intimidating tome borrows the cycle of grief from Kubler-Ross (denial/anger/bargaining/depression/acceptance) and thusly explores the banking crisis, the viability of multiculturalism, the ethics of Hollywood, the threat of both a virtual post-humanity as well as the bio-genetic organic possibility: architecture and film receive even treatments and there's even an examination of Josef Fritzl through a parsing of Sound of Music. What, you say? The Austrian who abducted, raped and impregnated his daughter and then kept the brood underground for years, that guy? Yep. It isn't pretty. I think the postmodern possibilities where everything is plastic and differences become relative is a threatening soil. Irony can be ignored and the glib becomes noisome.

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**and says**

"Badiou has reflected on the fact that we live in a social space which is progressively experienced as "worldless." Within such a space, "meaningless" violence is the only form protest can take. Capitalism is the first socio-economic order which de-totalizes meaning: there is no global 'capitalist worldview,' no 'capitalist civilization' proper: the fundamental lesson of globalization is precisely that capitalism can accomodate itself to all civilizations, from Christian to Hindu or Buddhist, from West to East. Capitalism's global dimension can only be formulated at the level of truth-without-meaning, as the 'real' of the global market mechanism. This is why the famous Porto Alegre motto... See More 'Another world is possible!' is too simplistic, it fails to register that right now we already live less and less within what can be called a world."

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**Vikas Lather says**

"The God we get here is rather like the one in the Bolshevik joke about a talented Communist propagandist who, after his death, finds himself sent to Hell. He quickly sets about convincing the guards to let him go to Heaven. When the Devil notices his absence, he pays a visit to God, to demand that the propagandist be returned to Hell. However, as soon as the Devil begins his address, starting with "My Lord . . .," God interrupts him, saying: "First, I am not your Lord but a comrade. Second, are you crazy for talking to fictions—I don't even exist! And third, be quick, otherwise I'll miss my Party meeting!"

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## David Sarkies says

### Zizek's View of the World

12 April 2017

When I read this book a few years back I wrote so much that I couldn't actually put it all onto a single Goodreads post so I ended up putting half of it onto the post, and the second half of it into a comment. Well, that didn't seem to work all that well, but then I discovered Blogger, and the art of Blogging, so I have since moved my original review from this site and moved it onto my blog, which for those who are interested in actually reading what I have written there you obviously have the link.

Anyway, while this wasn't the book in which I discovered Zizek, it was the first of his books that I read, and I must admit that it was a brick. In fact it was so thick that I took a break halfway through to read a couple of other books (namely because I wanted to give them to friends and family for Christmas, but not before I read them) before going back and finishing it of. Well, needless to say that after this rather indepth introduction to his philosophy I was impressed, though maybe it had something to do with him analysing films such as The Dark Knight, I am Legend, and of course his favourite Kung Fu Panda.

The idea of the book is basically exploring the collapse of society, and in doing so he explores it through the grief cycle. There are chapters that relate to each stage of the cycle, but he breaks it up with other chapters that explore similar themes but also go off on a tangent. Actually, as I come to think about it this does happen to be Zizek that we are talking about so his writings tend to end up going all over the place, and what will happen is that he will descend into some deep discussion of Lacan and the concept of the other, and you will be struggling to try to understand what it going on, only to resurface at another point to discover that some of the things that he is saying are actually really challenging and make a lot of sense.

The interesting thing about Zizek is he is an self professed communist, which is strange because he grew up in Solvenia, which was on the otherside of the Iron Curtain. The thing is that while we might jump up and suggest that for something to see the failures of communism first hand is foolish to hold onto the past, we must remember what the problems that arose was – it was not so much the economic system, but rather the totalitarian system – the people behind the Iron Curtian weren't upset and rebelling about the planned economy, they were upset at the fact that they didn't have freedom of speech, and that despite all of the problems, they still lived in poverty while the party leaders lived in luxury.

The other interesting thing is despite being an Athiest he seems to have a good view of Christianity, or at least a view of what it should be in an ideal world. You see the problem with Christianity happens to be christians, but that isn't surprising because, well, we happen to be human – the only difference between us and everybody else is that we understand that there is nothing that we can do to earn God's favour so we simply trust God that he has redeemed us. The thing is that despite all of the good things about Christianity, bad people get involved and pretty much twist the whole concept around. In a sense they forget many of the basic tennants and simply go around condemning everybody for their sins.

Anyway, since I have already written quite a bit on this book I think I'll just leave it off here and if you wish to go deeper into some of the concepts that are explored you can always jump over to my blog.

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## Cassandra Kay Silva says

I haven't read enough of Žižek yet to be as "tired" of him as some of the other commentators to this thread. Personally I find his style fresh. His eyes are keen. He can watch the most ridiculous movies. (Kung Fu Panda features in this one) and find some deeper connection to culture and what this says about our sociological interactions. He is very aware and in tune with culture which makes him interesting as a philosopher. I find him fascinating. Not only can most people not make these connections but the connections he makes are sometimes startling in their simplicity. I find it the most difficult when he references something I have not seen, read, or watched as he does not always expound enough on the details of the reference in some cases. In other cases I can understand that he does use similar anecdotes that I have seen before FROM HIM. I think this distinction needs to be made because, many authors use anecdotes we have all heard from other people and expect us to buy into this as new material. At least he is referencing his own insights and building upon his own mind. Isn't this how the mind works? We build on what we have grasped thus far? I find this a very mind to mind approach, that allows the reader to see where he is expanding and walk with him through his thoughts. Though I can understand how if you have read more of Žižek this may be frustrating I think this is a natural process for any thinker and am just happy we have someone with such a keen mind to delve into Hegel and Lacan's ideas and not be afraid to come up with his own as well.

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## Gorkem says

Žižek sevdi?im bir felsefeci. Okumas? zor olan kavramlar?na belli bir akademik geçmi? birikim do?rultusunda, size bilindik temalar? çokboyutlu gösterebiliyor. Fakat Ahir Zamanlarda Ya?arken, her ne kadar çok h?zl? bitirmi? olsam da, yazar?n bahsetmi? oldu?u konseptlerin art?k bayat ve a??r? bir populist bir yakla??m içinde yazd???n? düşünüyorum. Fakat, gene de kültürel, politik, ekonomik ve psiko-sosyolojik olarak yorumlar ilginçti.

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## Malcolm says

For the last few years Žižek has been exploring a set of ideas, some related to and developing Badiou's notion of the Idea of communism and others developing an analysis based around the enclosure of the commons of internal and external life, of ecological catastrophe and of exclusion. These ideas come together in this book that is, in itself, a continuation of a case being developed through *Once is Tragedy* and *In Defence of Lost Causes*, but in this case he takes a different turn exploring the 'end of capitalism' through the five stages of dying associated with the work of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. As with so much of Žižek's work, however, I am more engaged with the big picture and really like the frame he brings to bear here – the five stages and the four antagonisms in a single piece – than I am convinced by the specifics of his case.

My problem with the specifics lies in three aspects of the argument. First, I have trouble with the Lacanian aspect in that while I accept that these psychoanalytic approaches can be helpful, to generalise the motifs to a whole of social order seems to risk pushing psychoanalysis beyond its limits. That said, he is backing off the excesses of psychoanalysis we saw in his late 1990s and early 2000s work. Second, his prolific publications programme makes him hard to keep up with but more that he continually recycles and reiterates sections of his previous work while developing the case. This seems to me to be thinking out loud in public, which is a little indulgent – although I see here how the four antagonisms have developed through the previous two

works to become more sophisticated here. That said, there is repetition in this book, with sections of the Afterword (added to the paperback) repeating almost word for word and using identical evidence as the main text. It is also hard to see exactly why the Afterword has been added. Third, Žižek's pyrotechnics (in the blurb Sean O'Hagen is quoted as describing as "part philosophical tightrope, part performance-art marathon, part intellectual roller coaster ride") are in need of a rigorous and ferocious editing.

All of this is not to say that I didn't enjoy this (and I am not going to embark on a long critique, in part because I suspect that would take about 20,000 words) but that it could have been tighter and more focussed. Problematically, like so many of us in the world of academic analysis, the case is a much better analysis than it is a programme, other than the fairly trite point that even a universalist response to the crisis must be focussed on local conditions.

That said, there are parts of the analysis I really like – faith-based politics as a politics of anger at the crisis of capitalism is an unsettling and engaging case; post-modern politics as a sign of political depression, and the notion of a debate about political economy as bourgeois classes bargaining with the crisis/end of capitalism.

I'm pretty sure I'll come back to parts of this, but its episodic character (the product of framing the case through Kübler-Ross's work) means that it seems to lack overall coherence, and appears as if it is a working through of further ideas rather than being something like an end point – although the rapidity and fluidity of change associated with the crisis as well as collapse of grand-narratives means we'll be working through ideas for quite some time.

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## **Donna says**

I ate the whole thing without a background in philosophy. I probably shouldn't have done that. I probably should not be writing a review at all, but I have to comment on the ride. I could have used more bathroom breaks, but the driver was very fussy about gas stations. He didn't want any of those places where you have to beg the man for that tiny washroom key tied to a 2 x 4. The end times are distrustful times, so the log of shame knows no bounds. This meant I had to hold my pee a lot.

He likes to pass trucks a little too close. Smokes like a euro. I think he's some kind of communist.

In order to keep myself from being kicked out of the car, I had to do some things I'm not proud of: find a copy of 'Kung-Fu Panda'; read a story by Kafka; talk to the taxman about his poetry.

That's what I get for hitch-hiking alone.

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## **Leonardo says**

¡Es mucho muy bueno! Si fueron siguiendo mis publicaciones estos días se deben haber aburrido bastante. Debo haber agregado mil libros donde en la reseña citaba a este libro. Es que este libro está hecho con pedacitos de mil otros libros. Zizek leyó un montón y sabe un montón. Todo el tiempo me fue pasando que decía: "Uy, no, no tengo la menor idea sobre..." Arquitectura, Arte, Historia de Camboya, Historia de Haití, Rusia, Lacan, Freud, Marx, etc. Pero bueno, te incentiva a seguir leyendo y aprendiendo.

Como malo diría que no es la obra maestra de Zizek. Es más bien un rejunte, pareciera que está desesperado por sacar un libro por mes. Es impresionante lo que escribe este muchacho. Pero es entretenido y

actualizado.

El libro toma la idea del modelo de Kübler-Ross, de manera que frente a la idea traumática del fin del capitalismo experimentamos Negación, Ira, Negociación, Depresión y finalmente Aceptación. Sobre eso despliega una cantidad de teoría y conocimiento bestial, y muy interesante.

Creo que le falta una propuesta, y sobre el final lo admite. Pero de todas formas es interesante, creo que comulga con lo que alguna vez le escuché decir a Chiara Lubich: El mundo nuevo viene, implacable. Podemos ponerle trabas, o ayudarlo, pero venir, viene. Aunque me imagino que entre ellos hubieran diferido un poco en la imagen sobre el mundo nuevo.

Algunas otras cosas sobre las que se insiste mucho y me parece que me quedan:

- Hay que tener cuidado con las propuestas que intentan escapar al capitalismo, pero solo le ponen redes de contención (a imagen de la Foxconn poniendo redes alrededor de sus fábricas para que no se maten los empleados).
- El papel de la ideología (el gran tema de Žižek). ¡Cuidado!, en todo hay ideología, es mentira que la sociedad liberal actual es el fin de la ideología y cada uno hace lo que quiere. Hay una ideología hegemónica que nos dicta que hacer a cada paso.
- Relacionado con lo anterior, esta sociedad pos-política en la que nos toca vivir tiene grandes problemas por alejarse de la política, la forma de volver a tener el control, de repartir el poder es volver a la política. Economía despolitizada (la economía como ciencia natural) es en realidad la economía, las decisiones en manos de unos pocos, esos pocos tienen el poder.
- La discusión que le plantea al liberalismo respecto del derecho del otro: si cada uno hace lo que quiere, y es libre, ¿Quién tiene razón, el que usa Burka en París, el homosexual en Amsterdam, el que se burla de Mahoma, el que pone una bomba como reivindicación? Liberalismo no es tan sencillo como parece...

Merecidas cinco estrellas.

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## **Dan's Obsessions says**

Well its quite hard , ie realising why not a single one of ma friends liked. or from those that probably would, has been labeled in such a derog-downright silly kind'a'way.

Peerhaps in the end, my own mind, is also in the same mess Žižek's is, but he seems to be in the perfect way to decipher the current chaotic condition, our world has currently stepped in, not that he offers straight cut answers, but at least he gives it a few serious tries. Such a maelstorm of examples, ranging from one history medium to the next.. At times his contorted history-political axioms medium ebbs away in sheer speculation-utter confusion . But then in a couple of paragraphs,( if U are still in a position to grab his meaning) You get such a profound sense of his ~personal realisation~ as if he has offered U a doorway to his own perception, wrapped in teethers of his own multi-angled mind..

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## **Oliver Bateman says**

Arranged in five sections that correspond to the Kübler-Ross model of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance), Žižek's new book *Living in the End Times* tracks what he perceives to be the

slow decay of postmodern capitalism. He's covered most of these big themes elsewhere (opposition to "tolerance" and liberal multiculturalism, disdain for "Zionist anti-semitism," practical applications of the "parallax view," distrust of European and US-style "democracy," and a need for some sort of ill-defined radical Marxist "Christian" emancipatory movement (in the sense that one takes Jesus' message about love seriously, and also in the sense that one believes that "God" died on the cross on Calvary Hill)), and the parts of the book where responds to other scholars (Dipesh Chakrabarty, Alain Badiou, Bernard-Henri Lévy, Catherine Malabou, etc.) in an effort to clarify points about the the works of Marx, Lacan, Freud, et al. can get rather tedious. Moreover, despite the author's attempt to give the book structure by means of the five K-R-themed chapters, most of the material appears to have been cobbled together from notes, lectures, work that has appeared in magazines or on the internet, previous books, and so forth. Nevertheless, there are some amazing moments in here, such as Žižek's description of Christopher Nolan's Joker as an "antihero" of late capitalism as well as his wonderful comparison of the high kitsch of The Sound of Music with the high kitsch achieved by Josef Fritzl in the course of sexually abusing his imprisoned daughter so as to create a "second family" in his basement (this passage alone is worth the price of admission). *Living in the End Times* is best read in 5-10 page chunks, since it's simply too broad and discursive to be digested in a single sitting. Alas, the prescription for social change to be found in here--which essentially amounts to "take action (or don't take action, if that's the right thing to do) because everything is so rotten!"--might be "inspiring" in some vague way, but it isn't particularly helpful.

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## El says

The basic premise is that Žižek's book deals with "the four horsemen of the coming apocalypse" - the worldwide ecological crisis, imbalances within the economic system, the biogenetic revolution, and exploding social divisions and ruptures. That's exactly what it says on the back of the book. Sounds pretty interesting. I thought, if anything, the structure of the book would be primarily about the "four horsemen".

Instead what Žižek did was structure his book based on the Kübler-Ross model. In other words, the five stages of grieving: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Okay. Interesting concept. According to Žižek what is meant to be grieved, the loss in question, is capitalism. I suppose if I'm digging for an actual thesis (which I'm sure is in there somewhere) the death of capitalism is what is leading to the end of the world as we know it. Mmmkay... I'm almost still on board. But this Žižek guy is pretty much out of his mind, and everyone seems to be in agreement on that fact.

I disagree that every point he made in the different chapters based on the stages of grieving really had that much to do with the individual stages of grieving. Someone in our book club group had written down several examples to show how they do fit, but even he admits he didn't catch that on his first reading. (Yes, this crazy guy read this book twice.) My argument is (and usually always will be) that these sorts of issues should be relatively easily identifiable on the *first* reading. If it's not, something's missing. And that's what I feel happened here.

There are some individual words of serious wisdom here. I wrote down several notes of interest, and there are plenty of specific topics I wish Žižek would have expanded upon or clarified. Instead he sort of threw them out there with no real sense of resolution or interest in resolving his statements. Žižek referenced a lot of seemingly interesting other articles and literature, all of which appears to me to be *more* fascinating than what Žižek himself got out of it.

Also? He's a shitty Marxist. Apparently Marxism is an entirely arbitrary word and has an even more arbitrary



definition, which immediately negates what being a Marxist is. Just sayin. There's really no gray area in Marxism, so for Žižek to find some gray area is a bit suspect. Sure, take some ideas from Marxism, take some ideas from Lacan and Hegel, put it all together and then come up with a new name for your beliefs. Maybe it's just an issue of semantics, but this is exactly where semantics are important.

The only solution Žižek posited in this book is that Communism is the only way to save us, but at the same time agreed he wasn't entirely sure how to make that happen. Seems he just wanted to throw the idea out there and hope some kids take the idea, run with it, and figure out how to make it happen. Sort of like a schizophrenic handbook of sorts. Otherwise the book just ends, with no real conclusion. I read the paperback edition so there is an Afterword which actually clarifies a lot of issues and fills in a lot of holes he had left with the original text - but the one guy in our group who read the hardcover version missed out. His edition just ended after the chapter on Acceptance. When I look at it from that perspective I realize how sudden that would seem. Incomplete, even.

I have other issues too, like how it appears (based on only this one reading of Žižek so far) that he's really interested in serving his own career, which is ironic considering all that he has to say about capitalism. He claims what he is discussing is all of global importance, but this is a very Western-centric book. He focuses on Western society which certainly isn't global. One could argue that Western society is the dominant society, but that's not what Žižek suggests in the beginning, and that's certainly not what is suggested by the book cover.

I cannot get over just how misleading the book cover is.

The Kübler-Ross model structure is misleading as well. Perhaps if Žižek had published each chapter individually things would have been different. If he had thrown out small tracts like his beloved Communist Manifesto, I'd probably feel differently. I think how this book itself could have been improved is if he structured it as the four horsemen of the coming apocalypse based on his initial theory. *Those* could have been his chapters. The five stages of grieving could easily have been added throughout to give a little extra spice; as it was, there was too much spice and not enough cohesion and texture in the meat.

Žižek is way media-oriented - his interest lies in the media (film, news stories, radio, etc.) which is important especially in this day and age. But I don't think he recognized nearly enough the fact that the media is a corrupt organization just as is everything else.

Again, this is all based on one reading of one of his books. There are plenty of others, and I'll check them out. There's really no rush. He's interested in speaking to the elite, and I'm certainly not the elite. Whether or not I read his books is entirely inconsequential. There are plenty of other people out there who are interested in giving their money to promote him, and that's where he's going to pander his wares.

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## **Liza says**

I read it very fast, and while I was reading it I kept thinking, "This is just what I have always thought." Then, afterwards, I couldn't remember anything about it.

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## **Zawn V says**

Dear Slavoj,

I like you. In fact, ever since I saw a photo of you under a giant vagina, my boyfriend has theorized that I have an unhealthy obsession with you. You're starting to wear on me, though. Take a break from writing. Stop fantasizing about Lacan. Develop a slightly more linear thought process. Note: You can't do this in three weeks, so please don't write another book in three weeks. You write too much for it to be good, unique, or offer something new. You are hereby limited to one book every three years. No more repurposing previous material and spinning it into a new book, ok?

(Semi)Serious Review:

I feel like my buddy Slavoj is losing his edge with each new book. I discovered him with stars in my eyes as an undergraduate philosophy major, and he quickly became my favorite philosopher and an intellectual crush. But the long diatribes on subjects that are linked in his own mind are getting tedious, and I'm a little tired of hearing everything tied back to Hegel or Lacan.

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## **Anna says**

I am very proud of myself for finishing a book by Slavoj Žižek, as this has been an ambition for some while. (I've also learned from a friend that his name should be pronounced approximately Slav-osh His-ek. [EDIT: Correction to this in a comment below.]) This has been an ambition for years because much of what he writes is incredibly dense and difficult to read, unless you have a friendly familiarity with Hegel, Heidegger, Kant, et al. It isn't merely that he references all these authors work, he uses their language and, in particular, Lacan's. That is why it took me months to read this book - I periodically got bogged down in sentences like this:

If, then, 'it is *only* as a result of itself that it is spirit', this means that the standard discourse of Hegelian Spirit which alienates itself, and then recognises itself in its otherness and thus reappropriates its content, is deeply misleading: the self to which Spirit returns is produced in the very movement of this return, or, in other words, that to which the process of returning is returning is produced by the very process of returning.

I mean, come on. To be fair, though, on a number of occasions I tried to read this book at 5am when suffering from insomnia. That is evidently not the way to get the best from it. Nonetheless I persisted, because these philosophical quagmires are interspersed with fascinating and entirely comprehensible analysis of capitalism and its structural weaknesses. Moreover, Žižek throws in entertaining commentary on the ideological themes of films such as 'Kung Fu Panda' and 'Eagle Eye'. In short, this is a digressive and erratic book, covering an immense amount of ground. It approaches its theme of capitalism in crisis from many oblique directions, some of which work better for me than others. The arduous discussion of Hegelian Spirit quoted above is followed by an incisive summary of the Citizen's Income concept.

Despite my complaints that I don't know enough philosophy to understand swathes of 'Living in the End Times', overall the effort proved worth it. I found it largely thought-provoking and satisfying. It was quite

unlike any other book I've read. Here are a few memorable bits:

We should add here that, in our everyday lives, ideology is at work especially in the apparently innocent reference to pure utility - one should never forget that, in the symbolic universe, 'utility' functions as a reflexive notion, that is, it always involves the assertion of utility as meaning.

This is an important critique of economics as a discipline, which reduces decisions to utility functions that are allegedly neutral.

Freudian 'sexuality' designates not merely a constrained content (sexual practices), but the very formal structure of the relationship between Outside and Inside, between the external incident/accident and its *Aufhebung*/integration into the internal libidinal process it triggers.

I was interested in this as it implies that I've been taking Freud's approach to sexuality far too literally.

Civility stands for custom (or rather, what remains of custom) after the fall of the big Other: it assumes key role when subjects encounter a lack of substantial ethics, in other words when they find themselves in predicaments which cannot be resolved by way of relying on the existing ethical substance. [...] The more the 'deep' substantial ethical background is missing, the more a 'superficial' civility is needed.

This passage and subsequent pages brought to mind *On Offence: The Politics of Indignation* by Richard King. Žižek is talking of capitalism's moral vacuum, which seems to provide an explanation for the reflexive offence-taking that *On Offence: The Politics of Indignation* deals with. King's book comments that politics is experienced, 'as a clash of identities, as an expression of (or assault on) our individuality'. Without shared ethics or habitual civility, such politics will inevitably be acrimonious and, according to Žižek, useless at shifting power relations.

I also appreciated Žižek on climate change in the chapter titled 'Apocalypse at the Gates', in which he notes that ecological disaster has become normalised as something known but not believed. A contrast is drawn between the failure of the 2009 Copenhagen climate change talks and the immediate, radical response to the financial crisis of 2008. We can afford to save the banks but not the climate. As he puts it, 'We may worry as much as we like about global realities, but it is Capital which is the Real of our lives'.

Despite the often baffling jumps from theme to theme and poetry to cinema to philosophy throughout, I managed to find my bearings by picking out what interested me most. If there was an overriding ideology buried in here, it escaped me. A great deal of the book went completely over my head, but what I understood I enjoyed. As a final example, this passage embroidered on points I've come across before about the condition of constant ambivalence in late capitalism.

The problem is rather that we are forced to choose without having at our disposal the kind of knowledge that would enable us to make a proper choice - more precisely, what renders us unable to act is not the fact that we 'don't yet know enough' (about whether, say, human industry is responsible for global warming, and so on) but, on the contrary, the fact that we know too much *while not knowing what to do* with this mass of inconsistent knowledge, not knowing how to subordinate it to a Master-Signifier.

Maybe one day I'll even finish In Defense of Lost Causes.

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