

# **Demanding The Impossible Slavoj Zizek**

Liberals and conservatives proclaim the end of the American holiday from history. Now the easy games are over; one should take sides. Žižek argues this is precisely the temptation to be resisted. In such moments of apparently clear choices, the real alternatives are most hidden. Welcome to the Desert of the Real steps back, complicating the choices imposed on us. It proposes that global capitalism is fundamentalist and that America was complicit in the rise of Muslim fundamentalism. It points to our dreaming about the catastrophe in numerous disaster movies before it happened, and explores the irony that the tragedy has been used to legitimize torture. Last but not least it analyzes the fiasco of the predominant leftist response to the events.

Maverick philosopher Slavoj Zizek returns to explore today's ideological, political and economic battles—and asks whether radical change is possible In these troubled times, even the most pessimistic diagnosis of our future ends with an uplifting hint that things might not be as bad as all that, that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Yet, argues Slavoj Zizek, it is only when we have admitted to ourselves that our situation is completely hopeless—that the light at the end of the tunnel is in fact the headlight of a train—that fundamental change can be brought about. Surveying the various challenges in the world today, from mass migration and geopolitical

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tensions to terrorism, the explosion of rightist populism and the emergence of new radical politics—all of which, in their own way, express the impasses of global capitalism—Žizek explores whether there still remains the possibility for genuine change. Today, he proposes, the only true question is, or should be, this: do we endorse the predominant acceptance of capitalism as fact of human nature, or does today's capitalism contain strong enough antagonisms to prevent its infinite reproduction? Can we, he asks, move beyond the failure of socialism, and beyond the current wave of populist rage, and initiate radical change before the train hits? “Žizek leaves no social or cultural phenomenon untheorized, and is master of the counterintuitive observation” —The New Yorker

Žižek demands we take a long, hard look at the painful reality of education in contemporary capitalist society, and to actively seek out its ‘trouble in paradise’: Why is it education is supposedly failing to meet the demands of our society? Why is it there are record levels of stress for teachers? Why is it there is a record level of complaints from our university students? How is it now possible to compare a higher education course with a vacuum cleaner, toaster or television? This book illuminates aspects of Žižek’s ideas which sheds light into these modern challenges and tensions in education, and considers alternative ways forward. Though Žižek frustrates as much as he inspires with his own recipe of Lacan, Hegel and Marx, this book aims to give an entry route into Žižekian critique of education, a topic area he very rarely directly talks about.

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Part 1. The romance of war. 1. Technologies of War, Media, and Dissent in the Post-9/11 Work of Krzysztof Wodiczko ; 2. Historical reenactment: Romantic Amnesia or Counter-Memory? - Part II. The Body of War. 3. Abu Ghraib, Gender, and the Military ; 4. The Body as Political Corpus. - Part III. The Landscape of War. 5 Controlling the Frame: Photojournalism, Digital Technology, and "Modern Warfare" ; 6. Israel/Palestine and the Political Imaginary. - Conclusion : On Human Rights.

Taubman offers interdisciplinary ways to understand the educational reforms underway in urban education, teaching, and teacher education, and their impact on what it means to teach. He maps the totality of the transformation, taking into account the constellation of forces shaping it, and proposes an alternative vision of teacher education.

The essays in *Theology and the Political*—written by some of the world’s foremost theologians, philosophers, and literary critics—analyze the ethics and consequences of human action. They explore the spiritual dimensions of ontology, considering the relationship between ontology and the political in light of the thought of figures ranging from Plato to Marx, Levinas to Derrida, and Augustine to Lacan. Together, the contributors challenge the belief that meaningful action is simply the successful assertion of will, that politics is ultimately reducible to “might makes right.” From a variety of perspectives, they suggest that grounding human action and politics in materialist critique offers revolutionary possibilities that transcend the nihilism inherent in both contemporary

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liberal democratic theory and neoconservative ideology. Contributors. Anthony Baker, Daniel M. Bell Jr., Phillip Blond, Simon Critchley, Conor Cunningham, Creston Davis, William Desmond, Hent de Vries, Terry Eagleton, Rocco Gangle, Philip Goodchild, Karl Hefty, Eleanor Kaufman, Tom McCarthy, John Milbank, Antonio Negri, Catherine Pickstock, Patrick Aaron Riches, Mary-Jane Rubenstein, Regina Mara Schwartz, Kenneth Surin, Graham Ward, Rowan Williams, Slavoj Žižek

In Žižek's long-awaited magnum opus, he theorizes the "parallax gap" in the ontological, the scientific, and the political—and rehabilitates dialectical materialism. The Parallax View is Slavoj Žižek's most substantial theoretical work to appear in many years; Žižek himself describes it as his magnum opus. Parallax can be defined as the apparent displacement of an object, caused by a change in observational position. Žižek is interested in the "parallax gap" separating two points between which no synthesis or mediation is possible, linked by an "impossible short circuit" of levels that can never meet. From this consideration of parallax, Žižek begins a rehabilitation of dialectical materialism. Modes of parallax can be seen in different domains of today's theory, from the wave-particle duality in quantum physics to the parallax of the unconscious in Freudian psychoanalysis between interpretations of the formation of the unconscious and theories of drives. In The Parallax View, Žižek, with his usual astonishing erudition, focuses on three main modes of parallax: the ontological difference, the ultimate parallax that conditions our very access to reality; the scientific parallax, the irreducible

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gap between the phenomenal experience of reality and its scientific explanation, which reaches its apogee in today's brain sciences (according to which "nobody is home" in the skull, just stacks of brain meat—a condition Žižek calls "the unbearable lightness of being no one"); and the political parallax, the social antagonism that allows for no common ground. Between his discussions of these three modes, Žižek offers interludes that deal with more specific topics—including an ethical act in a novel by Henry James and anti-anti-Semitism. The Parallax View not only expands Žižek's Lacanian-Hegelian approach to new domains (notably cognitive brain sciences) but also provides the systematic exposition of the conceptual framework that underlies his entire work. Philosophical and theological analysis, detailed readings of literature, cinema, and music coexist with lively anecdotes and obscene jokes.

The Ticklish Subject confronts Deconstructionists and Habermasians, cognitive scientists and Heideggerians, feminists and New Age obscurantists by unearthing a subversive core to this elusive spectre, and finding in this core the indispensable philosophical point of reference of any genuinely emancipatory politics.

Slavoj Žižek, a leading intellectual in the new social movements that are sweeping Eastern Europe, provides a virtuoso reading of Jacques Lacan. Žižek inverts current pedagogical strategies to explain the difficult philosophical underpinnings of the French theoretician and practitioner who revolutionized our view of psychoanalysis. He approaches Lacan through the motifs and works of contemporary popular culture, from

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Hitchcock's *Vertigo* to Stephen King's *Pet Sematary*, from McCullough's *An Indecent Obsession* to Romero's *Return of the Living Dead*—a strategy of "looking awry" that recalls the exhilarating and vital experience of Lacan. Žižek discovers fundamental Lacanian categories: the triad Imaginary/Symbolic/Real, the object small *a*, the opposition of drive and desire, the split subject—at work in horror fiction, in detective thrillers, in romances, in the mass media's perception of ecological crisis, and, above all, in Alfred Hitchcock's films. The playfulness of Žižek's text, however, is entirely different from that associated with the deconstructive approach made famous by Derrida. By clarifying what Lacan is saying as well as what he is not saying, Žižek is uniquely able to distinguish Lacan from the poststructuralists who so often claim him.

"Based on live interviews, this book captures 'Ži'zek at his best, elucidating such topics as the uprisings of the Arab Spring, the global financial crisis, populism in Latin America, the rise of China, and even the riddle of North Korea. While analyzing our present predicaments, 'Ži'zek also explores possibilities for change. A key obligation in our troubled times, 'Ži'zek argues, is to dare to ask fundamental questions: we must reflect and theorize anew, and always be prepared to rethink and redefine the limits of the possible."--

A comprehensive overview of Slavoj Žižek's thought, including all of his published works to date. Provides a solid basis in the work of an engaging thinker and teacher whose ideas will continue to inform philosophical, psychological, political, and cultural



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" discusses the philosophers Theodor Adorno and Maurice Blanchot. Pt. 2 (p. 97-177), "Realism in 'the Concentrationary Universe', " deals with the literary works of Ruth Klueger and Charlotte Delbo. Pt. 3 (p. 179-273), "Postmodernism, or 'the Year of the Holocaust', " deals with Philip Roth, Art Spiegelman, and Americanizing the Holocaust. Derives from Holocaust testimonies the concept of traumatic realism as a way of superseding the realist vs. anti-realist dichotomy. Stresses the relation between present and past, and a shift from events to their transmission, including in mass culture, via such forms as comic books, feature films, and museum exhibits.

This book examines how theory and theorists have achieved a global audience as never before in the post-Global Financial Crisis era. This crisis and the rise of neo-right populism has brought about unprecedented interest in theory, which has become central to the political, economic, cultural and social reconstruction of the world. Probing beneath the level of TV punditry, Zizek offers a highly original and readable account that serves as a fascinating and insightful comprehension of the events of September 11.

What practical lessons can we learn from corporate theme parks, ad campaigns, video games, celebrity culture and Las Vegas? Can such examples of popular fantasy help us define and make possible a new political future? This is the case for a progressive political strategy that embraces a new set of tools. Although fantasy and spectacle have become the lingua franca of our time, Duncombe points out that liberals continue to

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depend upon sober reason to guide them. Instead, they need to learn how to communicate in today's spectacular vernacular.

Slavoj Žižek's prolific comments on anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, scapegoating, popular nationalism, the refugee crisis, Eurocentrism, the War on Terror, neocolonialism, global justice, and rioting comprise a dizzying array of thinking. But what can we pull out of his various writings and commentaries on race in the contemporary world? Is there anything approaching a Žižekian philosophy of race? Zahi Zalloua argues here that there is and that the often polemical style of Žižek's pronouncements shouldn't undermine the importance and urgency of his work in this area. Zalloua not only examines Žižek's philosophy of race but addresses the misconceptions that have arisen and some of the perceived shortcomings in his work to date. Žižek on Race also puts Žižek in dialogue with critical race and anti-colonial studies, dwelling on the sparks struck up by this dialogue and the differences, gaps, and absences it points up. Engaging Žižek's singular contribution to the analysis of race and racism, Žižek on Race both patiently interrogates and critically extends his direct comments on the topic, developing more fully the potential of his thought. In a response to the book, Žižek boldly reaffirms his theoretical stance, clarifying further his often difficult-to-work-out positions on some of his more controversial pronouncements.

Impossible Presence brings together new work in film studies, critical theory, art history, and anthropology for a multifaceted exploration of the continuing proliferation of

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visual images in the modern era. It also asks what this proliferation—and the changing technologies that support it—mean for the ways in which images are read today and how they communicate with viewers and spectators.

Framed by Terry Smith's introduction, the essays focus on two kinds of strangeness involved in experiencing visual images in the modern era. The first, explored in the book's first half, involves the appearance of oddities or phantasmagoria in early photographs and cinema. The second type of strangeness involves art from marginalized groups and indigenous peoples, and the communicative formations that result from the trafficking of images between people from vastly different cultures. With a stellar list of contributors, *Impossible Presence* offers a wide-ranging look at the fate of the visual image in modernity, modern art, and popular culture.

Contributors: Jean Baudrillard Marshall Berman Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe Elizabeth Grosz Tom Gunning Peter Hutchings Fred R. Myers Javier Sanjines Richard Shiff Hugh J. Silverman Terry Smith

The “formidably brilliant” Žižek considers sexuality, ontology, subjectivity, and Marxian critiques of political economy by way of Lacanian psychoanalysis. If the most interesting theoretical interventions emerge today from the interspaces between fields, then the foremost interspaceman is Slavoj Žižek. In *Incontinence of the Void* (the title is inspired by a sentence in Samuel Beckett's late masterpiece *Ill Seen Ill Said*), Žižek explores the empty spaces between philosophy, psychoanalysis, and the critique of political economy. He proceeds from the universal dimension of philosophy to

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the particular dimension of sexuality to the singular dimension of the critique of political economy. The passage from one dimension to another is immanent: the ontological void is accessible only through the impasses of sexualisation and the ongoing prospect of the abolition of sexuality, which is itself opened up by the technoscientific progress of global capitalism, in turn leading to the critique of political economy. Responding to his colleague and fellow Short Circuits author Alenka Zupančič's *What Is Sex?*, Žižek examines the notion of an excessive element in ontology that gives body to radical negativity, which becomes the antagonism of sexual difference. From the economico-philosophical perspective, Žižek extrapolates from ontological excess to Marxian surplus value to Lacan's surplus enjoyment. In true Žižekian fashion, *Incontinence of the Void* focuses on eternal topics while detouring freely into contemporary issues from the Internet of Things to Danish TV series.

The second volume of Zizek's collected key writings, this time showcasing his major writings on politics.

In this book, Sean Homer addresses Slavoj Žižek's work in a specific political conjuncture, his political interventions in the Balkans. The charge of inconsistency and contradiction is frequently levelled at Žižek's politics, a charge he openly embraces in the name of "pragmatism." Homer argues that his interventions in the Balkans expose the dangers of this pragmatism for the renewal of the Leftist politics that he calls for. The book assesses Žižek's political interventions in so far as they advance his self-proclaimed "ruthlessly radical" aims about changing the world. Homer argues the Balkans can be seen as Žižek's symptom, that element which does not fit into

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the system, but speaks its truth and reveals what the system cannot acknowledge about itself. In Part II Homer explores Žižek's radicalism through his critique of Alain Badiou, arguing that Badiou's "affirmationism" provides a firmer grounding for the renewal of the left than Žižek's negative gesture analyzed in Part I. What distinguishes Žižek from the majority of the contemporary Left today is his valorization of violence; Homer tackles this issue head-on in relation to political violence in Greece. Finally, Homer defends the utopian impulse on the radical left against its Lacanian critics. Kierkegaard has long been known as a philosopher and theologian, but his contributions to psychology, anthropology and sociology have also made an important impact on these fields. The articles featured in the present volume explore the reception of Kierkegaard's thought in the social sciences. Of these fields Kierkegaard is perhaps best known in psychology, where *The Concept of Anxiety* and *The Sickness unto Death* have been the two most influential texts. With regard to the field of sociology, social criticism, or social theory, Kierkegaard's *Literary Review of Two Ages* has also been regarded as offering valuable insights about some important dynamics of modern society.

First published in 2004. Routledge is an imprint of Taylor & Francis, an informa company.

In *Universal Politics*, Ilan Kapoor and Zahi Zalloua argue that, in the face of the relentless advance of global capitalism, a universal politics is needed today more than ever. But rather than appealing to the narrow particularism of identity politics, the authors argue for a negative universality rooted in social antagonism (i.e., shared experiences of exploitation and marginalization). This conception of shared struggle avoids the trap of a neocolonial universalism, while foregrounding the politics of the systematically dispossessed and excluded. The book examines what a universal politics might look like in



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Other People's Struggles is the first attempt in over forty years to explain the place of "conscience constituents" in social movements. Conscience constituents are people who participate in a movement, but do not stand to benefit if it succeeds. Why do such people participate, when they do not stand to benefit? Why are they sometimes present and sometimes absent in social movements? Why and when is their participation welcome to those who do stand to benefit, and why and when is it not? The work proposes an original theory to answer these questions, crossing disciplinary boundaries to draw on the findings of social psychology, philosophy and political theory, in search of explanations of why people act altruistically and what it means to others when they do so. The theory is illustrated by examples from British history, including the anti-slavery movement, the women's suffrage and liberation movements, labor and socialist movements, anti-colonial movements, anti-poverty movements and movements for global justice. Other People's Struggles also contributes to new debates concerning the rights and wrongs of speaking for others. Debates concerning the limits of

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solidarity--who can be an ally and on what terms--have become topical in contemporary politics, especially in identity politics and in the newest social movements. The work provides a theoretical and empirical account of how these questions have been addressed in the past and how they might be framed today.

Slavoj Žižek and Srećko Horvat combine their critical clout to emphasize the dangers of ignoring Europe's growing wealth gap and the parallel rise in right-wing nationalism, which is directly tied to the fallout from the ongoing financial crisis and its prescription of imposed austerity.

To general observers, the European Union's economic woes appear to be its greatest problem, but the real peril is an ongoing ideological-political crisis that threatens an era of instability and reactionary brutality. The fall of communism in 1989 seemed to end the leftist program of universal emancipation. However, nearly a quarter of a century later, the European Union has failed to produce any coherent vision that can mobilize people to action.

Until recently, the only ideology receptive to European workers has been the nationalist call to "defend" against immigrant integration. Today, Europe is focused on regulating the development of capitalism and promoting a reactionary conception of its cultural heritage. Yet staying these courses, Žižek and Horvat show, only strips Europe of its power and stifles its political ingenuity. The best hope is for Europe to revive and defend its legacy of universal egalitarianism, which benefits all parties by preserving the promise of equal representation.

Radical Visions 1968-2008: The Impact of the Sixties on Australian Drama is about a generation of Australian

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playwrights who came of age in the sixties. This important book shows how international trends in youth radicalism and cultural change at the time contributed to the rise of interest in alternative theatre and drama in a number of locations. It follows the career of Australia's major playwrights: Alma De Groen, Jenny Kemp, Richard Murphet, John Romeril, Stephen Sewell and David Williamson, whose early plays were first performed at La Mama and the Pram Factory theatres in Melbourne in the sixties and seventies and who continue to make new work. The book's dual purpose is to examine the impact of the sixties on playwriting and update the scholarship on the contemporary works with close readings of the plays of the nineties and the first decade of the twenty-first century. By analysing the recent plays, the book traces the continuing impact of left wing politics and cultural change on Australian theatre and society."

The great political ideas and movements of the modern world were founded on a promise of universal emancipation. But in recent decades, much of the Left has grown suspicious of such aspirations. Critics see the invocation of universality as a form of domination or a way of speaking for others, and have come to favor a politics of particularism—often derided as “identity politics.” Others, both centrists and conservatives, associate universalism with twentieth-century totalitarianism and hold that it is bound to lead to catastrophe. This book develops a new conception of universality that helps us rethink political thought and action. Todd McGowan argues that universals such as

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equality and freedom are not imposed on us. They emerge from our shared experience of their absence and our struggle to attain them. McGowan reconsiders the history of Nazism and Stalinism and reclaims the universalism of movements fighting racism, sexism, and homophobia. He demonstrates that the divide between Right and Left comes down to particularity versus universality. Despite the accusation of identity politics directed against leftists, every emancipatory political project is fundamentally a universal one—and the real proponents of identity politics are the right wing. Through a wide range of examples in contemporary politics, film, and history, *Universality and Identity Politics* offers an antidote to the impasses of identity and an inspiring vision of twenty-first-century collective struggle.

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Influential, exciting and often controversial, psychoanalytic theory has had a major impact in the humanities and social sciences. In a new edition of this classic book, Anthony Elliott masterfully introduces the reader to psychoanalytic theory. He provides lucid interpretations of key theorists, as well as exploring their impact on society, culture and politics. *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction* • discusses leading psychoanalytic theorists - from Freud to Lacan, Klein to Kristeva, Žižek to Laplanche; • examines the political and cultural dimensions of psychoanalytic studies, from feminism to postmodernism; • contains new material on Lacanian and post-Lacanian theory, the post-Kleinian psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion, psychoanalytic feminism and deconstructive psychoanalysis. Written by one of the

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world's leading social theorists, this engaging and influential text is essential reading for anyone wanting to learn about psychoanalytic theory and its cultural importance in our lives.

One of our most daring intellectuals offers a Lacanian interpretation of religion, finding that early Christianity was the first revolutionary collective. Slavoj Žižek has been called "an academic rock star" and "the wild man of theory"; his writing mixes astonishing erudition and references to pop culture in order to dissect current intellectual pieties. In *The Puppet and the Dwarf* he offers a close reading of today's religious constellation from the viewpoint of Lacanian psychoanalysis. He critically confronts both predominant versions of today's spirituality—New Age gnosticism and deconstructionist-Levinasian Judaism—and then tries to redeem the "materialist" kernel of Christianity. His reading of Christianity is explicitly political, discerning in the Pauline community of believers the first version of a revolutionary collective. Since today even advocates of Enlightenment like Jurgen Habermas acknowledge that a religious vision is needed to ground our ethical and political stance in a "postsecular" age, this book—with a stance that is clearly materialist and at the same time indebted to the core of the Christian legacy—is certain to stir controversy.

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