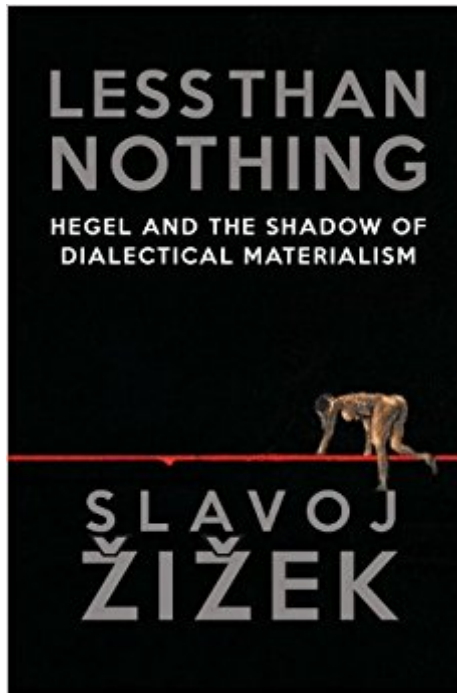




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Less Than Nothing: Hegel And The Shadow Of Dialectical Materialism



Synopsis

For the last two centuries, Western philosophy has developed in the shadow of Hegel, an influence each new thinker struggles to escape. As a consequence, Hegel's absolute idealism has become the bogeyman of philosophy, obscuring the fact that he is the defining philosopher of the historical transition to modernity, a period with which our own times share startling similarities. Today, as global capitalism comes apart at the seams, we are entering a new period of transition. In *Less Than Nothing*, the product of a career-long focus on the part of its author, Slavoj Žižek argues it is imperative we not simply return to Hegel but that we repeat and exceed his triumphs, overcoming his limitations by being even more Hegelian than the master himself. Such an approach not only enables Žižek to diagnose our present condition, but also to engage in a critical dialogue with key strands of contemporary thought—Heidegger, Badiou, speculative realism, quantum physics, and cognitive sciences. Modernity will begin and end with Hegel. From the Trade Paperback edition.

Book Information

File Size: 3888 KB

Print Length: 1049 pages

Publisher: Verso; 1 edition (May 22, 2012)

Publication Date: May 22, 2012

Language: English

ASIN: B007HXF2Q0

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #146,831 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #16

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Sciences > Philosophy > Modern

Customer Reviews

Invaluable review of all the philosophy that surrounds/embedded in Hegel from someone who understands it all. Phew! German Idealism is very hard, but now with Žižek leading the way, I GET it !

Many things germinating in the early Žižek oeuvre come to fruition here. Anyone who has been following the progress of this remarkable mind through the years would enjoy reading this magnificent book, finding reinforcement of many earlier themes and enjoying their maturation. Some things are new (at least to me, as I have not read a whole lot of the huge Žižek corpus), among them I would mention a "Lacanized" reading of Fichte, which not only sheds a new light on this great, difficult, and enigmatic thinker, but actually provides a solid framework for understanding his kind of idealism in the first place. Re-interpretation of Anstoss as a construct similar to "objet petit a" will keep any mind occupied for a long time.

Read it yourself.

challenging ideas.

Vast, even excellent. Delivers a great deal intersubjectively, strengthening concepts to the extent that it could be said the author offers something that exceeds the quality, in my opinion, much of what is found in the book's bibliography. Processual limits and related matters of affect and ethos have it so that resolution of minor obstacles falls on reader. Consider it great.

This is a warning: once you open this book and start to read, it is almost impossible to close it. There are great balls of fire jumping out every time you turn a page. Since the book contains 1038 pages, some of them must be read carefully, it may disrupt your plans, not just for the evening, but for the following days. What is especially provoking and enlightening is the way Žižek is positioning not just Hegel, but also Marx, in a Christian tradition. By turning Christianity upside down, and defining it as an atheist religion, he is able to make sense of the myths in a new and surprising way. And at the same time it suddenly is possible to see the links between Christianity, Marxism, and the Communism of Eastern Europe in a new way. His interpretation of Hegel is to me as a sociologist new and refreshing. Žižek not just defends Hegel in an admirable way, he clarifies the deep contemporary relevance of Hegel and his version of dialectical materialism in a way which demands attention, not just among philosophers, but also among sociologists trying to make sense of our

contemporary political economy. In a work with this scope, it goes without saying, there are also ideas and sections which demands further work and discussion. My critical comment (after 500 pages) is the way Marx political economy is treated. Seen from the point of departure of Hegel, it is justified with a main emphasis on Capital Volume 2, on circulation, and the relation to modern financial capitalism, which are our time-travelers, borrowing money from the future, and destroying it. According to my opinion, Marx analysis of technology, which is crucial to the ways in which humans relate to nature, deserves more attention. What appears to be a financial crisis is also, perhaps primarily, related to the ways in which technological paradigms destabilize the global economy and creates technological unemployment. A related issue is the missing debate on neo-classical economic theory, the phenomenological economy of Shutz and L  we, and the classical debate between the old guard in the Frankfurter School and the Stalinist Marxists on the dialectics of nature.

ARE YOU READY TO BRING THE KNIFE DOWN? Zizek is being tortured! He's upset about that. The language-game of philosophical discourse has been thrust upon him and it has been his tortured enclosure. He is an artist, a poet, a movie-goer, an attender of plays. His response therefore, is to torture this philosophy- language "back". He does this with the torsion-drive of a generic concept of "aesthetics". And he asks you to take your offspring of conceptual language (code-name Isaac) and put it on the altar before proceeding with his manuscript. Take the knife in your hand and prepare to sacrifice. Zizek is not difficult to understand. He is brilliant and accessible. But, he is a "slow-slow-slow-slow" read. That's to the 4th power. This 1,000 page book could have probably been reduced to 100 pages of conceptual presentation if you subtracted out the 900 pages of representative "thought-pictures" from the area of aesthetics he uses for illustration. You must (mandatory) have read and understood Badiou's "Being and Event"(2005) before taking on this manuscript. Zizek and Badiou have many similarities and mutually respect each other. Zizek lists his specific differences in the last section, but, by taking up Badiou's point of view, I felt these objections didn't hold much strength. Personally, I agree almost entirely with Zizek's position, so I just gained a lot of reinforcement a good part of the time. But I'm a "conceptual" kind of thinker; just "give me the facts"; so Zizek's style drove me to the aspirin bottle way too much. In fact, I took another tack. I'm using this volume as the Zizek Bible. I've already got his entire position down and now this volume can be used in a topical way to supplement my knowledge. I just did this with "mediation" tonight , and much preferred this approach to the book. Like I said, Zizek is brilliant and fully understandable; I give him 5 stars for sure. But read it front to back - NO WAY. It is a Bible. I'd rather read his"book

of Schelling; or "book of Freud"; or one of the topics like "mediation". This is my approach from now on. No more aspirin. If you're a poet at heart, you'll love this style. If you want academic language and concise conceptual presentation - forget it. I feel Zizek and Badiou are the two best postmodern thinkers out there. We now have all of Zizek in one volume which is great.

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