

The tremor of reflection

Slavoj Žižek's Lacanian dialectics

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In memory of Hinrich Fink-Eitel (1946–1995)

At first glance, the work of the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek seems to offer an irresistible range of attractions for theorists wishing to engage with contemporary culture, without accepting the flimsy postmodernist *doxa* which is often the only available gloss on it. Žižek's thought is still strongly coloured by his Althusserian background, and he is therefore rightly sceptical of the anti-Enlightenment sloganizing, and revivals of the 'end of ideology', which are the staple of so much cultural commentary today. At the same time, far from being dourly Marxist, his writings are informed by a vivid and sophisticated grasp of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, and are enlivened by constant reference to works of fiction, cinema, classical music and opera. They also cheerfully disregard ingrained oppositions between high and mass culture, without proclaiming a pseudo-populist levelling of aesthetic distinctions. Finally, Žižek's East European provenance provides a quirkily original perspective on the questions of subjectivity, phantasy and desire, and the problem of the resurgence of collectivist identities, which are so high on the agenda of the Left in Western Europe and North America today.

The very existence of this already sizeable body of work raises many intriguing questions. Why, for example, should the notoriously obscure and rebarbative thought of Lacan be of political interest not just to Žižek, but to a whole circle of Slovenian intellectuals? And why should Žižek be interested not simply in using Lacan to elaborate a new theory of ideology, but also to develop an extensive re-reading and defence of Hegel – the supposedly totalizing enemy of most contemporary theory? In short, why should a combination of German Idealism and psychoanalysis be seen as the most appropriate way to develop a critical social philosophy amidst the current upheavals and conflicts of Eastern Europe, and of the Balkans in particular?

The historical and political answer to these questions is to be found in the development of philosophy in ex-Yugoslavia between Tito's revolution and the break-up of the country, which began in 1991 with the secession of Slovenia. For Yugoslavian philosophical life was far from being dominated by the creaking orthodoxies of Soviet-style dialectical materialism, and included the far more plausible and congenial positions of what came to be known as the Praxis School.¹ The Marxism of the Praxis School was in fact a counterpart to the philosophical current known in the other half of Europe as 'Western Marxism'. But whereas in Western Europe the thought of Lukács, of Gramsci, of Adorno or Lefebvre could scarcely be taken to represent anything other than an oppositional and critical stance, the specific difficulty faced by the Praxis School was that their 'humanist' version of Marxism, inspired by the 1844 manuscripts of Marx, became – albeit unwittingly – supportive of the dominant ideology of the Yugoslavian regime, namely the representation of the Yugoslav social and economic system as a form of 'self-managing socialism'.

This, at least, is the view of Žižek and his fellow thinkers. In their account, the problem facing Slovenian intellectuals in the early 1980s was how to criticize the oppressive and manipulative character of a system which was itself based on the denunciation of bureaucratic manipulation. As Žižek puts it: 'not until the emergence of Yugoslav self-management did Stalinism effectively reach the level of deception in its strictly human dimension. In Stalinism, the deception is basically still a simple one: The power (Party-and-State bureaucracy) feigns to rule in the name of the people while everybody knows that it rules in its own interest ... in Yugoslav self-management, however, the Party-and-State bureaucracy reigns, but it reigns in the name of an ideology whose basic thesis is that the greatest obstacle to the full development of self-management consists in the "alienated" Party-and-State bureaucracy.'² Pre-empted,

as it were, by the opacity of a system based on the ideal of the transparency of a democratic and social control of production, younger Slovenian philosophers, in the 1980s, were looking for a theoretical approach which could function critically in their specific social context. When the ideal of transparency congeals into an obfuscating ideology, then perhaps the only way to preserve a certain aspiration to transparency is by acknowledging, rather than suppressing, an irreducible element of opacity in all social relationships.

At the same time, Žižek and his fellow thinkers did not wish to abandon the critical and dialectical tradition altogether, like intellectuals in other parts of Central and Eastern Europe, who have turned towards Hayekian celebrations of the free market, or the bleak accounts of modernity to be found in Heidegger or Foucault. And it is this determination, a reminder of the uniquely autochthonous features of Yugoslav socialism, which explains the unexpected arrival of Lacan in Ljubljana. For Lacan, as Žižek tirelessly reminds his readers, is no Nietzschean or post-Nietzschean.³ He is a theorist influenced above all by Freud and Hegel, two thinkers who – in their very different ways – can be viewed as seeking to preserve the essential impulse of critical, enlightening thought from the reductive and self-destructive simplifications of the Enlightenment itself. Indeed, Žižek formulates the aim of one of his books in the following terms: ‘against the distorted picture of Lacan as belonging to the field of “post-structuralism”; against the distorted picture of Lacan’s obscurantism, it locates him in the lineage of rationalism. Lacanian theory is perhaps the most radical contemporary version of Enlightenment.’⁴

It is thus the political context which in large part explains the intellectual investment of Žižek and his colleagues in a Lacanian reading of Hegel. Against the Left Hegelianism of the Praxis School, Žižek wants an account of Hegel which will bring out the intricate balance in his work between a profound adherence to the Enlightenment goals of freedom and autonomy and the acknowledgement of a pervasive non-transparency of social life, which is rendered unavoidable by modern individualism and the complex state mechanisms which seek to compensate for it. Correlatively this reading of Hegel may then serve, by a kind of feedback effect, to rescue Lacanian theory, as a source of insights into the subjective dimension of ideology, from post-structuralist appropriations. Of course, this project of reconciling Lacan and Hegel also helps to explain why Žižek’s work is of more general relevance in the context of contemporary philosophical and political debates. In Western Europe and North America a disillusionment

with the Marxist tradition has led to types of theorizing which, at the end of their deconstructive contortions, often boil down to little more than the endorsement of an existing culture of liberal pluralism. In Slovenia, and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, however, this pluralism cannot be taken for granted, for painfully obvious reasons. The idea that the ‘Enlightenment project’ is the source of all our ills can scarcely look other than callow to left intellectuals in Ljubljana, not to mention Belgrade or Sarajevo. And accordingly, once one penetrates behind Žižek’s skittish mode of presentation, it becomes clear that there is far more than simply philosophical coherence at stake in the assessment of his Lacanian-Hegelian enterprise.

The Lacanian subject

One of the most powerful aspects of Žižek’s work is its defence of the category of the subject against post-structuralist depredations. In his critiques of deconstruction, for example, Žižek shows that even this most sophisticated form of post-structuralist theory attempts to define the concept of the subject with the aid of an inappropriate model of self-presence, to which the movement of *différance* can then be counterposed. Taking the work of Rodolphe Gasché as his example of such a view, Žižek shows that deconstructive theorists cannot ultimately avoid positing some substrate (characterized by Gasché in terms of ‘infrastructures’) which resists the reflective self-presence of the subject. Even if this substrate is given its minimal Derridean characterization as ‘*différance*’, it must nevertheless still be presupposed as logically prior to, and as the condition of possibility for, the constitution of an identity which is thus revealed as ultimately factitious.⁵ Žižek therefore argues that, ‘In a paradoxical way, Derrida remains prisoner of the – ultimately “commonsensical” – conception which aims at freeing heterogeneity from the constraints of identity; of a conception which is obliged to presuppose a constituted field of identity (the “metaphysics of presence”) in order to be able to set to the unending work of its subversion.’⁶

Against this construction, in which the reflective self-identity of the subject is seen as excluding the ‘tain of the mirror’ which makes this reflection possible, Žižek argues that the identity of the subject consists in nothing other than the continual failure of self-reflection. In other words, there is no ‘space of inscription’ independent of and prior to the emergence of the supplement or the ‘re-mark’, which vainly attempts to encapsulate the text by means of a self-referential twist:

Reflection, to be sure, ultimately always fails – any positive mark included in the series could never

successfully represent/reflect the empty space of the inscription of marks. It is, however, this very failure as such which 'constitutes' the space of inscription. ... in other words, there is no infrastructural space of the inscription of marks without the re-mark. Re-mark does not 'represent'/reflect some previously constituted infrastructural network – the very act of reflection as failed constitutes retroactively that which eludes it.⁷

The Lacanian inspiration of this argument is clear. Žižek thinks of the subject not in terms of the imaginary self-coincidence of what Lacan calls the 'ego', but rather in terms of the lack or gap which is the correlative of the incapacity of the signifier to signify the subject *as* signifying. In Lacanian theory, Žižek asserts, 'the subject is nothing but the impossibility of its own signifying representation – the empty place opened up in the big Other [of the symbolic order] by the failure of this representation.'⁸ According to Lacan, this subject does encounter itself at the level of phantasy in the form of the '*objet petit a*', the object-cause of desire. But it encounters itself not in the sense of identifying itself reflectively, as in the mirror, but rather in the sense of confronting its own ungraspability. As Žižek writes: 'The spot of the mirror-picture is thus strictly constitutive of the subject; the subject qua subject of the look "is" only in so far as the mirror-picture he is looking at is inherently "incomplete" – in so far, that is, as it contains a "pathological" stain – the subject is correlative to this stain.'⁹ Deconstruction, and other disruptions of the supposed 'self-identity' of the subject, are thus based on a 'metaphysical' misreading of the subject, since they fail to realize that *différance*, non-self-coincidence, does not disrupt a subject essentially defined by its self-coincidence, but is rather the fundamental structure of subjectivity as such.

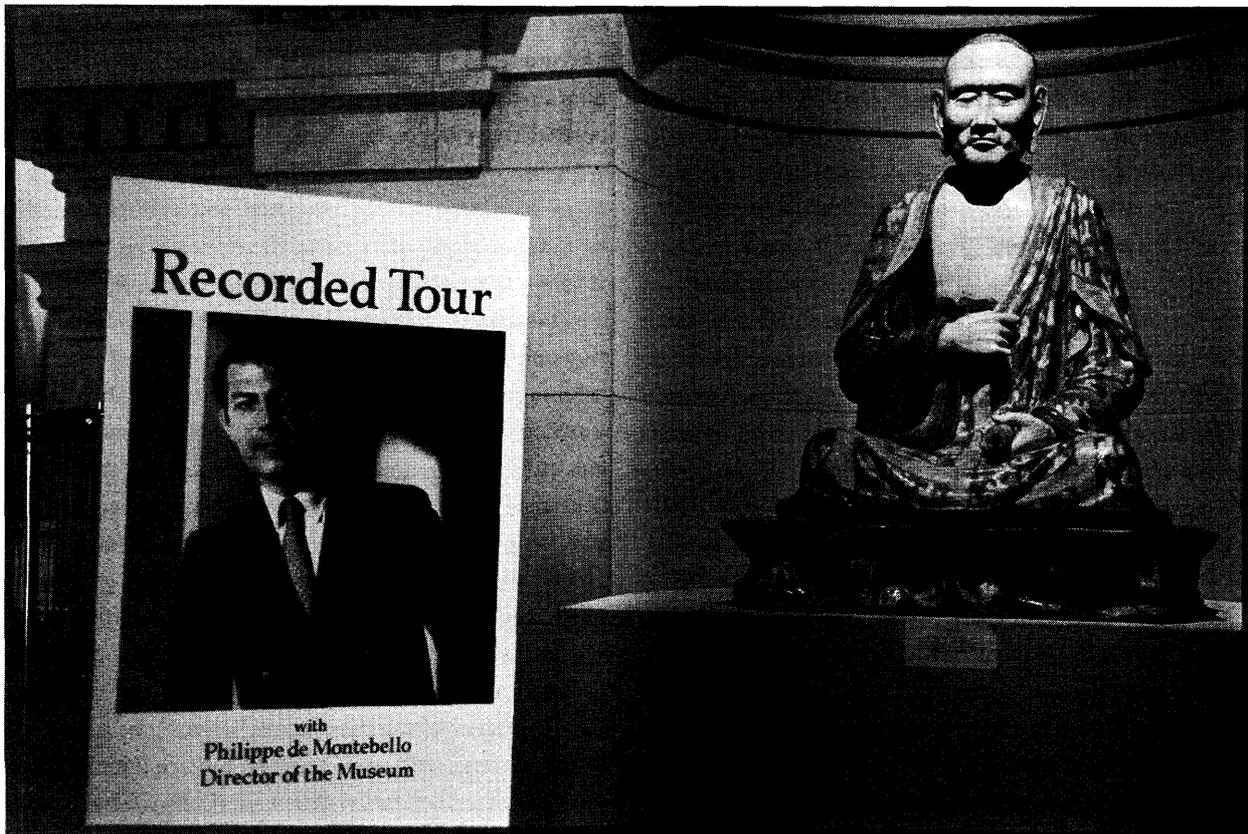
So far, this Lacanian riposte to deconstruction, plausible though it is in its own terms, is not particularly surprising. The plot thickens, however, when Žižek claims that an account of reflection as implying an intrinsic 'failure', an insufficiency which defines the subject, is already to be found in Hegel's *Logic*.

Hegel's logic of reflection

The theory of reflection which Hegel provides in the first chapter of the 'Doctrine of Essence', the second book of the first volume of the *Science of Logic*, is one of the constant touchstones of Žižek's analyses. The 'Doctrine of Essence' as a whole is Hegel's exploration of the structure of what could be termed 'theoretical consciousness' – the epistemic stance of any attempt, whether scientific or metaphysical, to explain reality in

terms of underlying principles and processes. It follows on from Book One, the 'Doctrine of Being', where Hegel demonstrates the internal inconsistency of the unreflective categories of our commonsense encounters with the world ('one' and 'many', 'quality' and 'quantity', 'magnitude', 'measure' and so on), and leads on to the second volume, the 'Doctrine of the Concept', where the problematic dualism of theoretical consciousness, with its splits between 'essence' and 'appearance', 'matter' and 'form', 'necessity' and 'contingency', is itself intended to be resolved. The opening chapter of the 'Doctrine of Essence' is of particular interest to Žižek because it is here that Hegel describes the fundamental processes of 'reflection', of abstraction and determination, which are the means by which the subject of theoretical consciousness gets a grip on its object. Since subjectivity, as it is understood in the modern period, seems to presuppose the capacity to turn inward on oneself, to divert attention from the immediate being of the object to the relation between the object 'in itself' and the forms of awareness in which it is revealed, the logic of reflection – so Žižek seems to assume – must give a vital clue to what Hegel takes the subject to be.

Throughout his work, Žižek employs many examples to illustrate the stages of reflection explored by Hegel – 'positing', 'presupposing', 'external' and 'determinate' (or 'absolute'). But one of the most accessible accounts is still to be found in the final chapter of his first book in English, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. Here Žižek employs the example of literary interpretation in order to illustrate the relation between the different forms of reflection. Thus, the initial standpoint of 'positing reflection' (*setzende Reflexion*) would be that from which we naively assume that the manner in which we interpret a work of literature gives us direct access to the work's true meaning. But this in turn requires us to presuppose the existence of a meaning which is objectively 'out there' to be identified and grasped. Hence positing and presupposing (*voraussetzende*) reflection turn out to be intimately interrelated – indeed, are simply two sides of the same process. This awareness of the unavoidability of presuppositions in all positing leads to the standpoint which Hegel terms 'external reflection'. Žižek describes this as the perspective from which the true meaning of the text is viewed as 'in-itself', to which any specific, historically determined interpretation can only approximate. However, it could equally be the view that the text is merely the material 'support' for a variety of interpretations, each valid in its own terms. The tension between these two dimensions of external reflection (one positing, one presupposing) is finally resolved in 'determinate reflection', which Žižek compares with the



standpoint of Gadamerian hermeneutics; here successive interpretations are viewed as the temporal unfolding of the intrinsic meaning or essence of the work itself.¹⁰

But, helpful though it is, this comparison with Gadamer may still give rise to misunderstanding, according to Žižek. He suggests that ‘if we grasp the plurality of phenomenal determinations [i.e. interpretations] which at first sight blocked our approach to the “essence” as so many self-determinations of this very “essence” [or ways in which the true meaning reveals itself], it could still be said that in this way – through “determinate reflection” – the appearance is ultimately reduced to the self-determination of the essence, “sublated” in its self-movement, internalized, conceived as a subordinate moment of self-mediation of the essence.’¹¹ To counter this misunderstanding, Žižek goes on to affirm that ‘it is not only that appearance, the fissure between appearance and essence, is a fissure internal to the essence itself; the crucial point is that, inversely, “essence itself is nothing but the self-rupture, the self-fissure of the appearance”.’

In order to make clear what he means by this, Žižek takes up the case of Feuerbach’s critique of Christianity. He explains that, from the standpoint of external reflection, the essence must be understood as something radically outside and opposed to the reflecting subject. In Feuerbach’s account, this would be the relation between the human being and God, understood theologically, and of course it is precisely this standpoint

which he characterizes as that of religious alienation. The aim of Feuerbach’s ‘Philosophy of the Future’ is to overcome this situation by re-appropriating the divine powers as in truth the powers of the reflecting subject, the embodied human being.¹² Žižek, however, criticizes this Feuerbachian recipe for the overcoming of alienation – a powerful influence on the young Marx – arguing that, in Hegel’s view, such a remainderless reappropriation of hypostatized powers is not possible.

The Feuerbachian gesture of recognizing that God as an alien essence is nothing but the alienated image of man’s creative potential does not take into account the necessity for this reflexive relationship between God and man to reflect itself into God himself... It is not enough for the subject to recognize–reflect himself in this Entity as in his inverse image; the crucial point is that this substantial Entity must itself split and ‘engender’ the subject (that is, ‘God himself must become man’).¹³

More formally, Žižek argues that ‘we pass from external to determinate reflection simply by experiencing the relationship between these two moments – essence as movement of self-mediation, self-referential negativity; essence as substantial positive entity excluded from the tremor of reflection – as that of reflection: by experiencing how this image of the substantial-immediate, positively given essence is nothing but the inverse-alienated reflection of the essence as pure

movement of self-referential negativity.’¹⁴

Žižek is certainly correct to suggest that the arrival at ‘determinate reflection’ represents the achievement of a certain plateau of stability within the overall development of Hegel’s *Logic*. What Žižek does not emphasize, however, is that the principal reason for this stability is the emergence of a proto-intersubjective structure, in which the interiority of the subject finds its balancing counterpart in the interiority of the object. For up until this point, as Hinrich Fink-Eitel has shown in his fine commentary,¹⁵ the movement of reflection has been determined by a tension between ‘negativity’ and ‘otherness’ which betrays the basic instability of the structure of ‘essence’ itself. To the extent that the ‘object’ of reflection was merely posited, and therefore merely ‘negative’ (non-self-sufficient), its lack of inner determinacy reacted back on the reflecting subject; to decipher only the meanings one has oneself projected into things is ultimately to confront one’s own vapidness. Correlatively, the elusive ‘otherness’ of the object presupposed by external reflection also threatened to reduce the subject to a helpless state of negativity, of epistemic exile from being, since if the object is entirely outside of our doings and sayings, then nothing can count as our responding to or being in touch with it.

By contrast, determinate reflection resolves this dilemma through the relation to an ‘object’ which is ‘reflected into itself’ (which has a determinant ‘interior’), so that its otherness is no longer cancelled by its negativity, and its negativity by its otherness.¹⁶ However, in seeking to define this interior, determinate reflection breaks apart into what Hegel calls ‘*Wesenheiten*’ (‘essentialities’) or ‘*Reflexionsbestimmungen*’ (‘determinations of reflection’/‘reflexive determinations’), such as ‘identity’, ‘difference’ and ‘diversity’, which can be thus considered as the basic structuring principles of any theoretically constituted object-domain. In this sense, as Fink-Eitel points out, ‘The determination of reflection is a relation of relations (“reflections-into-self”).’¹⁷ Formerly the distinction between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ of the object was itself directly drawn by the reflective activity of the subject, and was therefore radically other, a merely ‘related relation’, with respect to the subject as ‘relating relation’. But now this relation internal to the object is negated in its otherness, because it turns out to be the same relating relation (or ‘reflection-into-self’) which characterizes the subject also. In terms of the development of the *Logic* we have thus reached not only an equilibrium between subject and object, but an adumbration of what Fink-Eitel terms an ‘intersubjective conceptual constellation’.¹⁸ As Hegel himself puts it: ‘The determination of reflection ... has

for... [its] ... ground reflectedness-into-self. Positedness [i.e. the fact of being ‘opposed’ to the subject by the subject] fixes itself into a determination precisely because reflection is equality-with-self in its negatedness; its negatedness is consequently itself a reflection-into-self.’¹⁹

It is important to remember, however, that this ‘equality of reflection with itself’ can only offer a temporary respite. For the ‘Doctrine of Essence’ as a whole is concerned with working through the consequences of the fundamental contradiction or lopsidedness in the concept of essence – the fact that ‘essence’ refers both to the distinguishing and relating of a ‘surface’ and an ‘interior’ which Hegel regards as central to the structuring of reality in scientific and metaphysical thinking, and to one side of this relation – the ‘interior’ side – which is given ontological and explanatory primacy. It is this asymmetry which resurfaces after the achievement of the standpoint of determinate reflection, producing a movement through a series of ‘determinations of reflection’, from identity to difference, and thence to diversity and on to contradiction. It re-emerges because the determinations of reflection are not themselves understood as relational, as the pattern of the self-articulation of essence. They appear as equally valid (and hence as equally ‘arbitrary’) characterizations of an otherness which ultimately remains external to them.

Thus the logic of the determinations of reflection replays the logic of reflection from the opposite side of the contradictory structure of essence, as it were. Since the other of reflection is in fact the relation of reflection itself, the determinations of reflection will also be the externalized or ‘posited’ forms of the modes of reflection. Thus to positing reflection there corresponds the other as the empty negativity of self-identity; to presupposing reflection, the abstract other as presupposed difference; to external reflection, the other as diversity; and to determinate reflection, the other as negative but reflected into itself, and thus as opposed.²⁰ But because of the basic asymmetry – or inclusive/exclusive structure – of essence, the more the other is specified as opposed to the reflecting subject, the more the reflecting subject will find itself opposed to itself. To adapt a well-known formula of Lacan’s, reflection receives back from the other of reflection its own message in an inverted form.²¹

In Hegel’s account this process culminates in a crisis: ‘The self-subsistent determination of reflection that contains the opposite determination, and is self-subsistent in virtue of this inclusion, at the same time also excludes it; in its self-subsistence, therefore, it excludes itself from its own self-subsistence. ... It is thus

contradiction.²² As an intersubjective constellation, this relation can be characterized as a process of ‘excluding reflection’ in which each subject shuts out the other subject through whom she is constituted, and thus shuts out herself.²³ A temporary, proleptic resolution is provided by the shift to the final determination of reflection, ‘ground’. For ‘ground’ refers to that which accounts for the relation between the other, apparently conflicting determinations, and thus, in intersubjective terms, to an acknowledgement of commonality beyond our singular perspectives.²⁴ But the ‘logic of inner contingency’ which permeates essence, as Fink-Eitel terms it, can only be definitively overcome with the transition to the second volume of the *Logic*, the ‘Doctrine of the Concept’.

Hegel’s theory of the concept²⁵ can be understood in this perspective as characterizing a reciprocal relation of recognition, which overcomes the abstracting and subsuming *modus operandi* of reflective cognition. The vicious circularity of the structure of essence cannot be broken open by a further act of knowing, but only by the reflecting subject when it no longer seeks to ground its own identity by abstracting from its relation to the other. Only by acknowledging this relation as constitutive of its identity, just as this identity enters into the relation, can it finally resolve the conflict between necessity and contingency, the ground and that which is grounded.²⁶ At first sight, it may appear far-fetched to interpret the structure of the Hegelian concept in terms of reciprocal recognition; inversely, it may not be clear why Hegel would designate what we now term ‘intersubjectivity’ as ‘the concept’ (i.e. conceptuality). But this proposal can perhaps be made more plausible if we consider that the conceptuality of language, which is fundamental to human sociality, establishes a permanent possibility of reconciling conflicting subjective perspectives. Clashes of immediate viewpoint typically give rise to hermeneutically reflective conflicts, while a continuing discrepancy between interpretive schemata will eventually push us back to the basic shared question of what it means to grasp something conceptually at all, however different our orientations may be. Indeed, it could be argued that for Hegel the ‘life of the concept’ consists in nothing other than this constant process of rupture and negotiation.²⁷

Thus Hegel’s account of the concept does not imply a seamless, non-conflictual – perhaps even repressive – identity of self and other. In the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel himself characterizes the intersubjective relation which is ‘the Idea that has developed into self-consciousness’ as ‘the violent diremption of mind or spirit into different selves which are both in and for themselves and for one

another, are independent, absolutely impenetrable, resistant, and yet at the same time identical with one another...’²⁸ As Fink-Eitel stresses, contingency is not eliminated by Hegel on this account. It is precisely as contingent, self-reflective individuals that subjects must come to accept and affirm the commonality which binds them. This acceptance (which we could call ‘love’) does not cancel the acknowledgement of difference (which we could call ‘recognition’). For if identification simply abolished the relation of exclusion, then the result would be an undifferentiated tautology. In this sense, ‘The fundamental conflict of speculative logic as a whole, the conflict between immediacy and mediation, being oneself (*Selbstsein*) and otherness (*Andersheit*), is at the same time the basic conflict of Hegel’s practical philosophy, that between being oneself through love and being oneself through recognition.’²⁹ Nevertheless, this conflict is very different from the ruinous contradiction of the subjective standpoint of reflection, in which the subject struggles to objectify the intersubjective context in which she finds herself, and continually transforms this context in the very process. For the conflict between subjectivity and intersubjectivity is itself constantly under negotiation. It cannot therefore be equated with Žižek’s opaque, irremovable stain at the core of every subject.

Reason and contingency: Hegel’s monarch

In his resistance to such a reading of Hegel, Žižek frequently invokes the account of the monarchy in *The Philosophy of Right*. Indeed, Hegel’s theory of the monarchy functions in Žižek’s work as a crucial demonstration of the fact that Hegel fully acknowledges a blind spot at the very heart of his system, one which is itself a systematic requirement. For Žižek, the fact that Hegel installs at the summit of his constitution an individual selected by the natural contingency of birth clearly shows his grasp of the fact that ‘rational totality clings to an inert “piece of the real” precisely insofar as it is caught in a vicious circle’,³⁰ and that the political community therefore needs a point of transsymbolic condensation, where it can confront the opacity of its own identity.

Serious difficulties are raised, however, by Žižek’s elevation of the Hegelian monarch to paradigmatic status. First, as commentators have long pointed out, the deduction of the monarchy in the *Philosophy of Right* violates Hegel’s own procedure, inverting the usual dialectical movement – from the universal, via the particular, to the individual – between paragraphs 273 and 275. In the former, Hegel divides the ‘state as

political entity' into 'legislature' (universal), 'executive' (application to the particular) and 'crown' (individual power of ultimate decision), whereas in the latter he begins with the 'power of the crown', and argues that it 'contains in itself the three moments of the whole... , viz. (a) the universality of the constitution and the laws; (b) counsel, which refers the particular to the universal; and (c) the moment of ultimate decision, as the self-determination to which everything else reverts and from which everything else derives the beginning of its actuality.'³¹ As Vittorio Hösle has suggested, the departure from Hegel's own method which his option for the monarchy requires can only be seen as a regressive irruption of a monological *Subjektmetaphysik* at the summit of a system whose deepest intuitions derive from the dynamics of intersubjectivity.³² This is made starkly apparent by the fact that Hegel earlier argues – in line with contemporary conceptions – that sovereignty can only belong to the system of powers within the state as a whole, that 'sovereignty depends on the fact that the particular functions and powers of the state are not self-subsistent or firmly grounded either in their own account or in the particular will of the individual functionaries, but have their roots ultimately in the unity of the state as their single self.'³³ As Hösle indicates, this view is hard to square with the claim that the will of the community must ultimately be entrusted to the subjectivity of a single individual. Furthermore, Hegel's argument that the natural immediacy of the head of state as an individual requires that he be selected by the accident of birth is laughable, as Marx – following Ruge – pointed out: 'Hegel has demonstrated that the monarch must be born, a truth no one has questioned, but he has not proved that birth makes the monarch.'³⁴ It should also be noted that the role of the Hegelian monarch is not always limited to 'dotting the i's', as Žižek likes to suggest. In fact, in the main text of *The Philosophy of Right* the monarch is described as having more extensive powers: he can appoint the government, reject laws as well as endorse them, and is responsible for foreign affairs. Indeed, Hegel stresses that no ground can be required for the king's decisions.³⁵ But, as Hösle also argues, there are no reasons *internal* to Hegel's system why the ultimate power of decision should not be vested in an elected president, or even in a collective leadership, rather than being allotted by parentage.³⁶

Lacan's critique of Hegel

The dubiousness of Žižek's use of the Hegelian monarch as a test case for his account of the relation between rational system and contingency suggests that his Lacanian reading of Hegel does not do justice to the

complexity of Hegel's thought. For Žižek persistently jams the dialectical movement prior to the point where the 'inner contingency' of essence is overcome through the move from essence to concept.³⁷ It is only this truncation of Hegel's thought which enables him not only to assert the compatibility of Hegel and Lacan, but even to claim that Lacan's own critique of Hegel is in fact an unwitting confirmation of Hegel.³⁸ At the same time, however, a strong case can be made that Lacan's resistance to healing of the rift between universality and particularity is justified, since the Hegelian concept – despite its intersubjective traits – is ultimately the embodiment of a domineering, subsumptive universality. To read Hegel in this way would in fact mean endorsing Lacan's criticisms of Hegel, whereas Žižek himself consistently suggests that these criticisms are misguided and misplaced. So what is the basis of Lacan's critique of Hegel? Is it true to claim, as Žižek does, that it is no more than naively 'deconstructivist' *avant la lettre*?

Lacan's divergence from Hegel begins in the early 1950s. Up until this point, he had been profoundly influenced by the notion of a dialectic of recognition derived from Kojève's and Hyppolite's interpretations of the *Phenomenology*. But from the second *Seminar* (1954/5) onwards, he begins to ask: how can recognition itself be recognized? How can I ever be sure that the sign or gesture which the other offers me is indeed an expression of recognition? What this means, in Hegel's own terminology, is that the disjunction between (subjective) certainty and (intersubjective) truth, which drives the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, can no longer be resolved in absolute knowing, any more than the opposition of 'being' and 'essence' can be overcome in the 'concept'. According to Lacan, 'Truth – for Hegel – is nothing other than that which knowledge can apprehend as knowledge only by putting its ignorance to work. A real crisis in which the imaginary is resolved, through the engendering of a new symbolic form, to use my own categories.' However, Lacan continues, 'This dialectic is convergent and attains the conjuncture defined as absolute knowledge. In the form in which it is deduced, it can only be the conjunction of the symbolic with a real of which there is nothing more to be expected. What is this real, if not a subject fulfilled in his identity to himself? From which one can conclude that this subject is already perfect in this regard, and is the fundamental hypothesis of this whole process.'³⁹ What Lacan opposes, therefore, is what he takes to be the Hegelian presupposition of the identity of subject and Other, the assumption that the real is ultimately construable in terms of the reflexive structure of self-consciousness. Indeed, if truth in the emphatic sense revealed by psychoanalysis

is marked by the unpredictability and unmanageability of the real, then it can be said that ‘the ideal which Hegel promises us as absolute knowledge’ would be the ‘perfect instrument’ for ‘shutting the bolt on truth (*verrouiller la vérité*)’.⁴⁰

In the light of this Lacanian critique of Hegel, it is interesting to observe how Žižek attempts to reconcile Hegel’s account of ‘absolute knowledge’ with his Lacanian convictions. Žižek writes that ‘usually Absolute Knowledge is understood as the phantasy of a discourse which is full, without rupture or discord, the phantasy of an Identity which includes all divisions, whereas our interpretation, by bringing out, in absolute knowledge, the dimensions of the traversal of phantasy perceives exactly the opposite... Far from filling the lack felt by finite consciousness, separated from the absolute, Absolute Knowledge displaces the lack into the Other itself. The turning introduced by Absolute Knowledge concerns the status of lack: finite or alienated consciousness suffers the loss of the object, and “dis-alienation” consists simply in the experience of the fact that this object was lost from the very beginning, and that any given object merely fills the empty place of this loss.’⁴¹ Here Žižek interprets the subject’s confrontation with the gap-filling function of the object of desire as the ‘loss of loss’ and equates this with the Hegelian ‘negation of the negation’. The loss of loss, Žižek writes, ‘is the moment when loss ceases to be the loss of something and becomes the opening of the empty space where the object is located’.⁴² Yet the differences between this account and that of Hegel are not hard to discern. For, as Fink-Eitel suggests, the negation of the negation in Hegel can be understood as the self-destruction of the negative relation between consciousnesses whose relation to themselves (and thus to each other) is negative or abstract (polarized between empirical plenitude and reflective vacancy, or vice versa), with the result that the other ceases to be a *limit* of the self.⁴³ In Žižek’s interpretation of Lacan, however, the loss of loss does not involve the cancellation, or even relativization, of a limit or lack, but rather an acceptance of the fact that what appeared to be a *reparable* loss is in fact a *constitutive* lack. The resulting conclusion, that ‘subject is the nonsubstance, he exists only as a nonsubstantial self-relating which maintains its distance from inner-worldly objects’,⁴⁴ is surely incompatible with Hegel’s claim that ‘everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*’.⁴⁵ Indeed, the confrontation between a subject reduced to empty reflexivity and an ontologically distinct world of objects, which Žižek here evokes as the definitive Hegelian view, constitutes precisely what Hegel considers to be the contradictory standpoint of ‘external reflection’.

Reflection and being: the Hegelian equation

So far we have found that the Lacanian theory of the subject is not compatible with Hegel’s philosophy, as Žižek repeatedly claims it is – with an insistence one is tempted to interpret psychoanalytically. At the same time, Hegel’s speculative logic of the concept (*Begriff*) has been presented not as the theory of an abstractly dominating universal, but rather as *modelling* an intersubjectivity which overcomes the one-sidedness of reflection – tracing a structure which renders it hermeneutically accessible. At least to this extent it appears to converge with Lacan’s fundamental aim: to overcome the reified, reflective structure of the ego through the subject’s acceptance of its position within the order of symbolic exchange. In consequence, might we not be driven to conclude that Lacan is indeed compatible with Hegel, although in different perspective from that which Žižek adopts? Here it is fascinating to observe the convergence between Lacan’s Hegel-critique and the discussion of the problems of Hegel’s theory of reflection to be found in the work of contemporary German philosophers such as Dieter Henrich and Manfred Frank.

As we have already seen, Hegel’s logic of reflection concludes with determinate reflection: the structure in which the relation between essence and appearance *within* the object of reflection is no more than an externalized mirroring of the relation *between* the reflecting subject and this object itself. In such a perspective, essence has proved itself to be the ‘truth of being’,⁴⁶ transforming the latter into illusory being or *Schein*. In the terms of Dieter Henrich’s classic account, the ‘autonomous’ or self-related negation which defines ‘essence’, and which he considers the fundamental operation (*Grundoperation*) of Hegel’s philosophy in general, has negated itself, giving rise to the immediacy of being. Yet since this immediacy is the result of the self-application of negation, it loses its self-sufficiency, becoming no more than the negative pole in the self-relation of essence.⁴⁷ However, as Henrich points out, this argument relies on a questionable shift of meaning (*Bedeutungsverschiebung*) of the term ‘immediacy’ between the ‘Doctrine of Being’ and the ‘Doctrine of Essence’. In the former, immediacy is indifferently opposed to mediation, whereas in the latter it becomes a feature of self-sufficient mediation, of the negative self-relation.⁴⁸ Henrich himself suspends judgement on whether this shift in meaning is theoretically justified or justifiable. But Frank, developing his argument, is unequivocal: Hegel’s logic of reflection falsely assumes that the result of the self-cancellation of autonomous negation can still be seen as the shadow of such negation, even after it has cancelled itself, or that the relation

between reflection and the *other* or reflection can be construed in terms of the reciprocal implication of positing and presupposing within reflection itself.⁴⁹ Hegel, in other words, elides the notion that positing might be what *defines* immediacy as negative, without being its *originator*.⁵⁰

This insistence on the irreducibility of being to reflection is clearly in harmony with Lacan's fundamental intuitions. Yet at the same time it also seems to block the emergence of those patterns of dialectical interaction (whether purely reciprocal or not) with which both Hegel and Lacan are so centrally concerned. It is important to remember here, however, that current 'intersubjective' readings of the *Logic*, inspired by the pathbreaking work of Michael Theunissen, do not claim that Hegel delivers a speculative *deduction* of intersubjectivity.⁵¹ Indeed, according to Theunissen, Hegel's account of the concept tends to reinstate precisely the dominating metaphysics of reflection it was intended to overcome, as when he claims that the concept has '*subjugated* [*sich unterworfen*] being and essence, which from other starting points include also feeling and intuition and representation, and which appeared as its antecedent conditions, and has proved itself to be their unconditioned ground.'⁵² But in contrast with this, as Theunissen also indicates, other passages in the *Logic* portray the experiential content of the concept in terms of Hegel's youthful terminology of 'love', thus implying that the concept lies beyond the limits of theory (and so of reflection).⁵³ Thus, as Fink-Eitel has suggested, the intersubjective reading of Hegel's famous 'negation of the negation' as the self-abolition of the negative relation between negatively self-related individuals 'avoids becoming an interdeterminate tautology only because the determinate distinction between recognition and what is recognised is presupposed by the relation of recognition, whose introduction is thus external to the *Logic*. Self-determined negation [Henrich's 'autonomous negation'] is the premise of the logic of the concept, because its premise is the intersubjective relation of recognition.'⁵⁴ In other words, the logic of the concept is tied hermeneutically to its practical context: 'The medium of intersubjective recognition is the ground of speculative logic.'⁵⁵

A Lacanian politics?

On the one side, therefore, we have critiques of Hegelian 'absolute reflection', such as that of Manfred Frank, which block the absorption of being into reflection, but which thereby risk perpetuating an unmasterable contingency of being, against which reflection breaks. On the other, we have readings of Hegel which seek to overcome this risk by stressing that his work is inspired by experiences – such as that of love – which transfigure

and transcend such contingency, although it also betrays them through its tendency to deny the limits of philosophical theory and to reinstate a metaphysics of reflection. Paradoxically, Žižek belongs to the first camp, while believing himself to be offering an exegesis and defence of the unsurpassability of 'absolute reflection'. Žižek's Lacanianism is thus not Hegelian; it cannot acknowledge and incorporate the complexity and ambivalence highlighted by the second interpretive tradition. But if Žižek does not in fact succeed in fusing Lacan and Hegel together, there are grounds for scrutinizing the success with which he reconciles the Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment impulses of his political thinking in general.

In his article on 'Eastern European Liberalism and its Discontents', for example, Žižek argues that liberal universalism secretes an irrational attachment to particularity as its necessary counterpart: 'The Rawlsian liberal-democratic idea of distributive justice ultimately relies on a "rational" individual who is able to abstract a particular position of enunciation, to look upon himself or herself and all others from a neutral place of pure "metalanguage" and thus to perceive all their "true interests"'. This individual is the supposed subject of the social contract that establishes the coordinates of justice. What is thereby *a priori* left out of consideration is the realm of fantasy in which a community organizes its "way of life" (its mode of enjoyment).'⁵⁶ More generally, Žižek claims that 'every "enlightened" political action legitimized by reference to some form of "true interests" encounters sooner or later the resistance of a particular fantasy space: in the guise of the logic of "envy", or the "theft of enjoyment"'.⁵⁷ In consequence, 'the supposedly neutral liberal democratic framework produces nationalist closure as its inherent opposite.'⁵⁸ These political claims follow directly from Žižek's conception of the subject as the counterpart of the traumatic contingency of the Real, which remains excluded from the regulated exchanges of the symbolic order.

It is true that Žižek sometimes presents the attachment of the subject to the contingent 'Thing' which embodies enjoyment as dissoluble. In the essay on Eastern European liberalism Žižek argues that 'the way to break out of the vicious circle is not to fight "irrational" ethnic particularism but to invent forms of political practice that contain a dimension of universality beyond capital'.⁵⁹ He suggests that the ecological movement may embody such a dimension. However, since Žižek portrays the subject as *essentially* split between universality and particularity, it is not clear how the *type* of universality invoked can resolve this ontological dilemma. Similarly, when Žižek attempts to give his position a critical edge by suggesting that we may bring ourselves to experience 'the collapse of the big Other' –

in other words, of the Symbolic order – or ‘consummate the act of assuming fully the “nonexistence of the Other”’,⁶⁰ he ignores the fact, which he stresses elsewhere, that the Other is a transcendental function for Lacan.⁶¹ Of course, no particular holder of power can be equated in his or her function with the ‘Master Signifier’, which sustains the Other of the symbolic order as such. But, at the same time, the tendency towards this conflation is viewed by Žižek and his school as a profound and ineradicable feature of human sociality.

These consequences of Žižek’s position could be summarized in the suggestion that Žižek is ultimately a ‘Right Hegelian’ masquerading – albeit unwittingly – as a ‘Left Hegelian’. Žižek views the modern individual as caught in the dichotomy between his or her universal status as a member of civil society, and the particularistic attachments of ethnicity, nation and tradition, and this duality is reflected in his own ambiguous political profile – *marxisant* cultural critic on the international stage, member of a neo-liberal and nationalistically inclined governing party back home. Indeed, in some respects Žižek’s stance can be compared with that of the followers of Joachim Ritter, who powerfully reasserted the right-Hegelian tradition in his classic essay on ‘Hegel and the French Revolution’. For Ritter, ‘Hegel conceives the dichotomy of historical existence into subjectivity and objectivity as the form in which its unity maintains itself and in which the modern world finds its corresponding shape.’⁶² The abstract and ahistorical principle of modern civil society, as the sphere of interactions between individuals pursuing their private, naturally determined interests, paradoxically ‘sets free . . . the life relationships which are not reducible to it’, namely the corresponding sphere of tradition in which ‘the right of subjectivity’s particularity and freedom are preserved’.⁶³ Consequently, Ritter argues, ‘it becomes clear to Hegel that the dichotomy not only does not have to lead to the destruction of world-historical continuity, but is precisely the condition which makes it possible and can secure the continuance of the substantial order of tradition within the realm of the modern world.’⁶⁴

Ritter’s interpretation of Hegel’s politics is clearly contentious, and the members of his school have regularly been attacked by the Left in Germany for their political disingenuousness. Under the conditions of contemporary capitalism, it is argued, Ritter’s ‘tradition’ could only take the form of ideological planning, the provision of a cushion of ‘fake substantiality’, in Habermas’s phrase, against the harshness of an increasingly instrumentalized world. At the same time, Ritter’s account of *Entzweiung* has a venerable history: it is a version of the conservative view of Hegelian ‘reconciliation’ as insight into the inevitability of diremption which is as old as Hegel’s philosophy itself.

Significantly, Žižek takes a similar line. “‘Reconciliation”,’ he claims, ‘does not convey any kind of miraculous healing of the wound of scission, it consists solely in a reversal of perspective by means of which we perceive how the scission is in itself already reconciliation ...’⁶⁵ Indeed, while Ritter’s position remains true to Hegel’s intentions in so far as it seeks to strike a balance between universality and particularity, ahistorical form and historical content, Žižek’s account of ideological closure explicitly *prioritizes* particularity over universality, contingency over necessity, in a way which denatures the Hegelian dichotomy, however it is understood, and transforms all reason into ‘rationalization’, in the Freudian sense: ‘A system reaches its equilibrium, i.e. it establishes itself as a synchronous totality, when – in Hegelese – it “posits” its external presuppositions as its inherent moments and thus obliterates the traces of its traumatic origins.’⁶⁶ Thus if the bad faith of Ritter’s conservatism consists in the refusal to acknowledge that, under modern conditions, ‘tradition’ inevitably degenerates into ideological fabrication, the *méconnaissance* of Žižek’s leftism lies in his apparent innocence of the fact that his theory ultimately endorses the covert cynicism of the Ritter school.

Love and law: tracking the *objet a*

It was earlier suggested – and, I hope, has been established by this point – that Žižek’s Lacanianism is not Hegelian. But I now want to ask: is it even Lacanian? Might it not be the case that Lacan’s own position is closer, in its aspirations and oscillations, to the second reading of Hegel (that of Theunissen and his followers) than to Manfred Frank’s critique of Hegel’s theory of reflection?

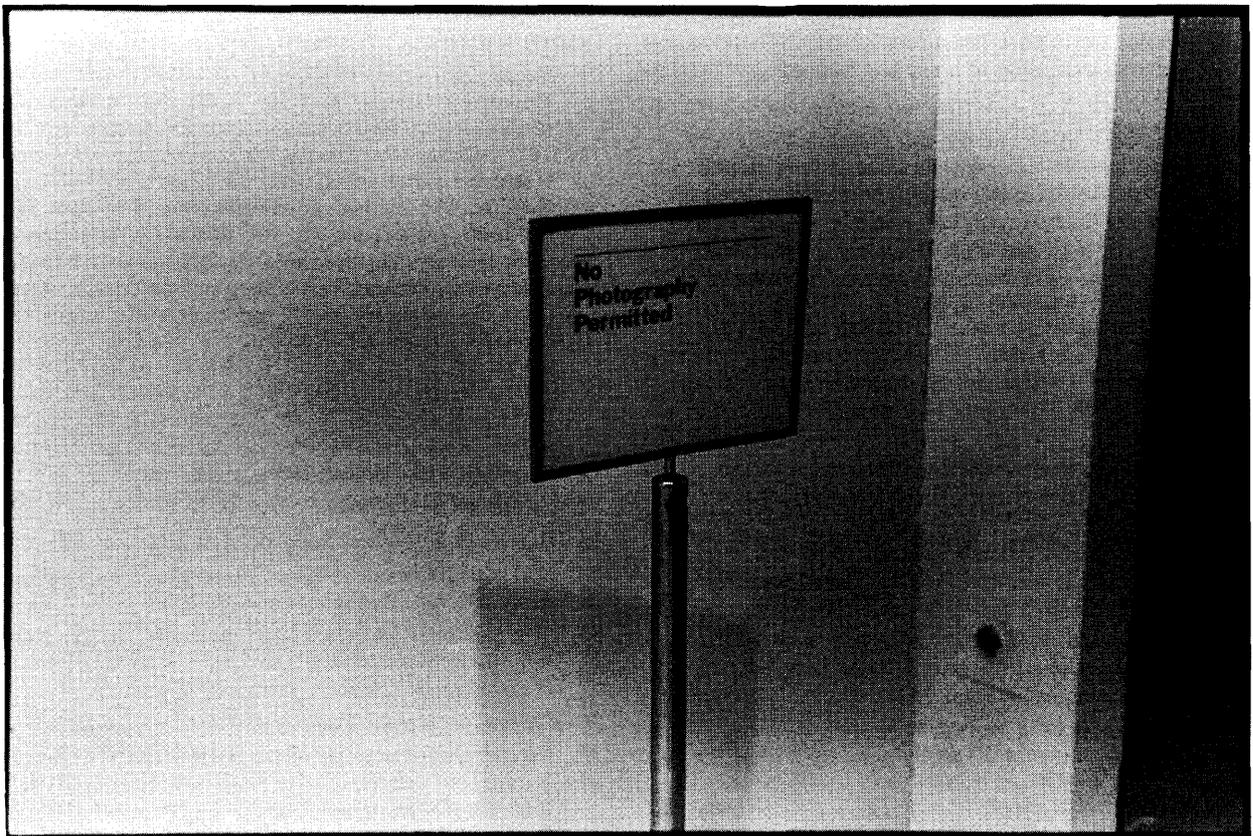
Žižek never ceases to emphasize that the subject must be seen as the correlative of the opaque stain which Lacan describes as the *objet a*. The introduction of the *objet a* at the end of the 1950s was indeed the result of Lacan’s growing realization that something fundamental to the subject cannot be expressed by the collectively shared, and thus universal, ‘treasure of the signifier’. As Lacan’s thought developed, however, he increasingly came to appreciate that the status of the *objet a* cannot be reduced to brute contingency, but derives from the fact that it is the object of the *desire* of the Other. Thus, in a certain sense, the mediation between subject and Other is restored by the *objet a*, for this object is phantasized as securing the being of the subject by embodying that mysterious part of the subject which is desired by the Other.⁶⁷ Of course this relationship, in which the *objet a* serves to connect desire to desire, still leaves a fundamental elusiveness on both sides – the unknowability of the desire of the Other corresponds to

the unknowability of the self. But it is nevertheless misleading to suggest, as Žižek frequently does, that the subject must either accept its own lack (as in earlier Lacan), or come to terms with the lack in the Other (the Other's incapacity to return full recognition). For the lack of Other *is* its own lack, and in this sense at least the subject and the Other are one. According to Žižek the 'impossibility' of absolute reflection derives from the 'dark spot' in the mirror which is said to be 'strictly constitutive of the subject'.⁶⁸ But this means that, properly speaking, he has no account of intersubjectivity at all. By contrast, for Hegel and – I would argue – for Lacan, this impossibility stems from the foreclosure by reflection of its own intersubjective (which does not mean transparent) ground.

Thus, ultimately, Lacan's thought can be seen as directed towards that 'communicative freedom' which is also the focus of Theunissen's reading of Hegel.⁶⁹ The conflict between love and recognition (between being with *oneself* in the Other, and being with oneself in the *Other*) is translated by Lacan into the tension between love and law, which is generated by the simultaneity of the *non-identity* between subject and Other and the *identity* implied by the non-identity between *both* self and Other and the symbolically mediated relation between them.⁷⁰ Lacan faces the question of love when he asks: what happens when the subject comes face to face with the object of desire – when it ceases to be the unconscious object of phantasy? In accepting the contingency of its own desire, may not the subject be

able to pass beyond it? And at the end of his seminar on *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* he concludes that 'The analyst's desire is not a pure desire. It is a desire to obtain absolute difference, a desire which intervenes when, confronted with the primary signifier, the subject is, for the first time, in a position to subject himself to it. There only may the signification of a limitless love emerge, because it is outside the limits of the law, where alone it may live.'⁷¹

It is important to note that Lacan speaks of a signification of love 'outside the limits of the law'. For there is a tendency in the work of Žižek and his school to view love as merely a compensatory mirage generated by law. It is assumed that an 'inherent impossibility of attaining the object' is concealed by the apparent hindrances to love, that 'it is the constraint (of discourse, of the social symbolic structure) that actually produces love' as a 'dissimulation which covers the subject's own radical lack'.⁷² But when Lacan suggests that 'what is aimed at in love is the subject, the subject as such, insofar as it is presupposed behind an articulated phrase, which is organized, or can be organized, in terms of a life as a whole', he does not claim that this integrity of the subject – however difficult – is sheerly unattainable.⁷³ For all his pessimism, Lacan was far too astute not to know that an ontology of 'inner contingency', of the foreclosure of trauma, and thus of insuperable irrationality and domination, would be no less suspect than one of eirenic consensus. Indeed, one could claim that, in stressing the status of love as the 'failure of the unconscious' (in other



words, the paradoxical breakdown of the constitutive inaccessibility of subjects to each other),⁷⁴ the final stage of Lacan's work confirms Žižek's hypothesis of the ultimate convergence of Lacanian and Hegelian thought. For both Lacan and Hegel can be seen as grappling with the problem of the relation between love and law, and thus between ethical life and morality, which is surely one of the most desperate political questions posed to us by the modern world. But at the same time Žižek's 'Lacanian' reading of Hegel, which takes the 'tremor of reflection' as Hegel's final word on subjectivity, and thus condemns the subject to a perpetual alienation, renders this question, the true focus of the convergence, impossible even to frame.

Notes

A much earlier version of this article appeared as 'Hegel in Analysis: Slavoj Žižek's Lacanian Dialectics' in the *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, nos 21/22, 1990. I am grateful to the members of the RP Collective for their comments on the present version, and to Jay Bernstein for his invaluable marginalia. This text is included in my forthcoming collection of essays, *The Limits of Disenchantment* (Verso, autumn 1995).

1. For a representative sample of the work of the Praxis School, see Mihailo Marković and Gajo Petrović, eds, *Praxis: Yugoslav Essays in the Philosophy and Methodology of the Social Sciences* (Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, vol. XXXVI), Dordrecht, Holland, Riedel, 1979. See also the journals *Praxis*, 1965–74, and *Praxis International*, 1980–93.
2. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (hereafter *SOI*), London, Verso, 1989, p. 198.
3. 'Lacan's work makes almost no references to Nietzsche. Lacan always insists on psychoanalysis as a truth-experience: his thesis that truth is structured like a fiction has nothing to do with the post-structuralist reduction of the truth-dimension to a textual "truth-effect"' (*SOI*, p. 154).
4. *SOI*, p. 7.
5. 'Cette alterité est même la condition de la présence' (Jacques Derrida, *La voix et le phénomène*, Paris, PUF, 1968, p. 95).
6. Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (hereafter *FTKN*), London, Verso, 1991, p. 88.
7. *FTKN*, p. 86.
8. *SOI*, p. 208.
9. *FTKN*, p. 89.
10. Cf. *SOI*, pp. 213–14.
11. *SOI*, p. 214.
12. Cf. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1986, esp. pp. 52–73.
13. *SOI*, p. 228.
14. *SOI*, pp. 227–8.
15. Cf. Hinrich Fink-Eitel, *Dialektik und Sozialethik: Kommentierende Untersuchungen zu Hegels 'Logik'*, Meisenheim, Anton Hain, 1978.
16. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 94–5.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
19. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1989, p. 407.
20. Cf. Fink-Eitel, *Dialektik und Sozialethik*, p. 114.
21. 'Human Language . . . constitutes a communication in which the sender receives back his own message from the receiver in an inverted form' (Jacques Lacan, 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis', in *Écrits: A Selection*, Tavistock, London, 1977, p. 85).
22. *Science of Logic*, p. 431.
23. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 432. Miller translates 'ausschliessende Reflexion' more weakly as 'exclusive reflection'.
24. As Charles Lewis points out in his pioneering, Lacan-inflected reading of the *Logic*, 'ground' – as the determination of the other determination – can thus 'represent the totality of "Reflexionsbestimmungen" while being one member of the totality: by ceaselessly circulating through all the "Wesenheiten" it creates the totality (and therefore itself) in the act of circulation.' It therefore inscribes the ambivalent position of the subject within the intersubjective field of language. Cf. Charles Lewis, *Hegel's Critique of Reason*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1978, p. 175.
25. 'Concept' seems preferable as a translation of 'Begriff' to Miller's use of the traditional English equivalent 'Notion', with its numinous overtones. 'Theory', rather than 'doctrine', is often the most idiomatic rendition of 'Lehre'.
26. Cf. *Dialektik und Sozialethik*, pp. 193–201.
27. Cf. Christoph Menke, 'Der "Wendepunkt" des Erkennens: Zu Begriff, Recht und Reichweite der Dialektik in Hegels *Logik*', in Christoph Demmerling and Friedrich Kambartel, eds, *Vernunftkritik nach Hegel*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1992, esp. pp. 50–51.
28. *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind. Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 177 (para. 437, *Zusatz*, and para. 436, *Zusatz*).
29. *Dialektik und Sozialethik*, p. 116.
30. Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out*, New York and London, Routledge, 1992, p. 88.
31. *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1967, p. 179. This methodological discrepancy was noted at an early date. In 1821 Nikolaus von Thaden, who had corresponded with Hegel for many years, sent him a letter in which he enquired why the logical order introduced in para. 273 had been dropped, and why 'out of zeal for the princes – when the only thing at issue is the deduction of the Idea – a dogmatic constitution has been preferred to an actual one?' As far as we know, the hapless disciple never received a reply. Cf. Nikolaus von Thaden, 'Brief an Hegel (1821)', in Manfred Riedel, ed., *Materialien zu Hegels Rechtsphilosophie*, vol. 1, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1975, pp. 76–80; and Vittorio Hösle, *Hegels System: Band 2: Philosophie der Natur und des Geistes*, Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1988, p. 568.
32. Cf. *Hegels System: Band 2*, p. 570.
33. *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, pp. 179–80 (para. 278).
34. Karl Marx, 'Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State', in *Early Writings*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1975, p. 91.
35. 'The personal majesty of the monarch... as the final subjectivity of decision, is above all answerability for acts of government' (*Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, p. 187).
36. Cf. *Hegels System: Band 2*, p. 570n.
37. Another glaring example of this abuse of Hegel's thought is Žižek's repeated citation of the phrase 'Spirit is a bone', from the phrenology chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as if this were Hegel's definitive statement on

- Spirit. Cf. *SOI*, pp. 207–9; *FTKN*, p. 119, etc. The claim that Žižek arbitrarily arrests the movement of Hegel's thought is of course the basis of Rodolphe Gasché's reply to the critique of his own position in *FTKN*, pp. 72–80. Unfortunately, the issues here are almost hopelessly tangled. Gasché is certainly right to complain that Žižek creates 'the deceptive impression that Hegel's concept of identity is always already bereft of its absolute telos' (Cf. Gasché, 'Yes Absolutely', in *Inventions of Difference: On Jacques Derrida*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1994, p. 213 and pp. 278–9, n.14). However, Gasché wants to claim *both* that Hegel moves beyond the antinomies of reflection with his concept of 'absolute identity' *and* that deconstruction can unpick absolute identity without becoming re-entangled in those antinomies. It is these claims which Žižek rightly rejects as implausible. In developing a deconstruction of absolute identity (as being constituted through its relation to an unmasterable other, etc.), Gasché simply reproduces Hegel's own critical 'logic of reflection'. Furthermore, in so far as he tries to place deconstruction beyond this logic by appealing to an Otherness which would not be 'an Otherness in opposition to identity' (ibid., p. 279), he sets up a non-relation between identity and Otherness which immediately triggers the paradoxes of reflection (e.g. Gasché's 'infrastructures' must be without relation to identity, yet they cannot be because they are 'quasi-transcendentally' constitutive of it, and thus inevitably contaminated by it). But this does not mean that Žižek's view is ultimately to be preferred because it stresses the unsurpassability of these paradoxes. Rather, the move beyond reflection which Gasché terms 'philosophical thinking' (ibid.) needs to be understood not in terms of a self-defeatingly theoreticist version of deconstruction, but in terms of the opening of thought towards the tension of love and recognition.
38. Cf. *FTKN*, pp. 94–5n.
 39. Both quotations are from *Écrits: A Selection*, p. 296.
 40. Jacques Lacan, 'Réponses à des étudiants en philosophie sur l'objet de la psychanalyse', in *Cahiers pour l'analyse*, no. 3, May–June 1966, p. 6.
 41. Slavoj Žižek, *Le plus sublime des hystériques – Hegel passe*, Paris, Point Hors Ligne, 1988, p. 159.
 42. Ibid., p. 154.
 43. Cf. *Dialektik und Sozialethik*, p. 203.
 44. *Enjoy your Symptom*, p. 137.
 45. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977, p. 10.
 46. 'The truth of *being* is *essence*' is the first sentence of the 'Doctrine of Essence'.
 47. Cf. Dieter Henrich, 'Hegels Logik der Reflexion', in *Hegel im Kontext*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1971, p. 109. Cf. Also Henrich, 'Hegels Grundoperation', in U. Guzzoni et al., eds, *Der Idealismus und seine Gegenwart*, Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1976.
 48. Cf. ibid., p. 111.
 49. Cf. Manfred Frank, *Der unendliche Mangel an Sein: Schellings Hegelkritik und die Anfänge der marxischen Dialektik*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1975, p. 57.
 50. Cf. ibid., p. 50.
 51. For a sample of Theunissen's approach in English, see 'The Repressed Intersubjectivity in Hegel's Philosophy of Right', in Drucilla Cornell et al., eds, *Hegel and Legal Theory*, London and New York, Routledge, 1991. Prospective readers should be warned that the translation is seriously garbled.
 52. *Science of Logic*, p. 591. Cf. Michael Theunissen, *Sein und Schein: Die kritische Funktion der Hegelschen Logik*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1980, p. 332.
 53. '... the universal is, in its other, in peaceful communion with itself. We have called it free power, but it could also be called free love and boundless blessedness, for it bears itself towards its other as towards its own self; in it, it has returned to itself' (*Science of Logic*, p. 603. Cf. *Sein und Schein*, pp. 42–6).
 54. *Dialektik und Sozialethik*, p. 205.
 55. Ibid., p. 142.
 56. Slavoj Žižek, 'Eastern European Liberalism and its Discontents', *New German Critique*, no. 57, Fall 1992, p. 44.
 57. Ibid., p. 45.
 58. Ibid., p. 47.
 59. Ibid., pp. 46–7.
 60. Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, Durham NC, Duke University Press, 1993, p. 237.
 61. *Enjoy Your Symptom*, p. 103.
 62. Joachim Ritter, 'Hegel and the French Revolution', in *Hegel and the French Revolution: Essays on the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge Mass., MIT Press, 1984, p. 65.
 63. Ibid., pp. 77, 79.
 64. Ibid., p. 78.
 65. *FTKN*, p. 78.
 66. *Tarrying with the Negative*, p. 227. For Žižek's formal argument that 'Necessity arises out of contingency', and is thus inherently ideological, cf. 'Why Should a Dialectician Learn to Count to Four?', *Radical Philosophy* 58, Summer 1991.
 67. Žižek ignores this 'return' to intersubjective mediation when he writes that 'in his Seminar on *Transference* (1960–1961), Lacan renounced the motif of intersubjectivity: what is lost in it is the fact that, to a subject, another subject is first and foremost an *object (a)*, that which prevents him from fully realizing himself. . . .' (*Enjoy Your Symptom*, p. 139). For the development of Lacan's theory of the *object a*, see Catherine Millot, *Nobodaddy: L'hystérie dans le siècle*, Paris, Point Hors Ligne, 1988, pp. 87–113.
 68. *FTKN*, p. 88.
 69. Cf. *Sein und Schein*, pp. 37ff.
 70. This structure could thus be termed the 'difference of identity and difference'; its fundamental signifier in Lacan's work is, of course, the phallus. In a Lacanian reading of the *Logic* which differs strikingly from that of Žižek, Charles Lewis has suggested that the category of ground, which 'circulates' between the two poles of essence and thus resolves its antinomy, inscribes this function of the phallus. Cf. *Hegel's Critique of Reason*, p. 175n and note 23 above. Whether Lacan is justified in describing this function as essentially phallic is, of course, a highly contested issue to which I intend to return elsewhere.
 71. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Harmondsworth, Peregrine, 1986, p. 276.
 72. Cf. Slavoj Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality*, London, Verso, 1994, p. 94; and Renata Salecl, 'Love: Providence of Despair', in *New Formations*, no. 23, Summer 1994 (Special issue on 'Lacan and Love'), pp. 22, 24.
 73. Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire livre XX: Encore*, Paris, Seuil, 1975, p. 48.
 74. Cf. the deliriously punning title of one of Lacan's last seminars: *L'insu-que-sait de l'Une-bévue s'aile à mourre* ('L'insuccès de l'Unbewusst, c'est l'amour'). For this late thematics of love in Lacan, cf. Serge André, *Que veut une femme?*, Paris, Navarin, 1986, ch. 14.