not clear to me that in itself it can produce the effects he suggests. Perhaps more importantly, a broader vision of the nature of sovereignty can also mean that the resolution Craig suggests — the move to a world state — is by no means the only, not mention most desirable resolution to the important challenges he identifies. In fact, an alternative path forward can be found by looking at one of the figures at the center of this book: Hans Morgenthau. For it can be argued that Morgenthau was not quite as befuddled in the face of nuclear weapons as Craig implies, and that he sought in his later work to revive a republican American patriotism that could oppose jingoistic nationalism, provide leadership more sensitive to international dangers, and be more amenable to the construction of forms of international order without requiring the — in many ways worrying — creation of a global state.

These issues could obviously be developed at greater length, but it is one of the achievements of this book that it puts such questions clearly back at the center of the study of world politics, and at the center of Realism in all its forms. Craig's book provides a fine example of how substantial intellectual history can contribute to an engagement with contemporary political dilemmas as well as clarifying theoretical lineages.

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Slavoj Žizek: Live Theory

Rex Butler

Continuum, London, 2005, vii + 165pp.

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This is an interesting book. However, to save the time of those who may be dithering about whether to read it or not, note that Rex Butler tells us that Žizek ‘fundamentally *has nothing to say*’ (p. 123). This at least explains why there are no direct answers to the strings of rhetorical questions that pad out the text. The ‘fundamental question’ posed here, we are told quite late on, is ‘What is the relationship between the master-signifier and *objet a* in Žizek’s work?’ (p. 70), and the answer is that there is an ‘impossible simultaneity’ between the ‘act’ and the ‘master-signifier’.

The book is not an ‘introduction’ to Žizek’s work, but it does piece together a series of arguments that Žizek makes about the ‘act’, the ‘master-signifier’

and other quasi-Lacanian concepts. It rather obsessively worries around this problematic, that 'Zizek seeks to think the *simultaneity* of the act and the void, the master-signifier and *object petit a*' (p. 93). And then Butler is rather discomfited to find that Zizek himself sometimes falls into the 'same mistakes of which he accuses others' (or, more accurately, the mistakes that Butler's Zizek would accuse others of). It is necessary, then, to elide the difference between Butler's Zizek and Lacan, for a Lacanian take on this question would, of course, emphasize that there must be a difference, a 'gap', between concepts.

Chapter 6 is a brief 'interview' with our theorist, and so follows the format of these Continuum 'live theory' books, but Zizek does not throw any light on the claims that Butler makes in the preceding chapters. Still less are we able to judge what he would make of Butler's argument. Instead, we are presented with a *pot-pourri* of his preoccupations and off-cuts (including paragraphs pretty much pasted in direct from a reply to one of his critics already published in another journal). Are we to laugh or cry at Zizek's claim that the Vietcong cut off the left arm of each child vaccinated by US Army doctors when they retook a village, and that this 'thorough rejection' of the enemy 'has to be endorsed in its basic intention' (p. 147)?

This ostensibly radical critique of human rights does not qualify as an 'act' in Lacanian terms, still less as a revolutionary act to be endorsed by any Marxist. This idiocy, designed to shock his liberal academic readers no doubt, does nothing to transform the symbolic coordinates of the life-world of a subject (and surely not for Zizek himself who repetitively rehearses this kind of claim so often that it serves to lock him into an evidently imaginary position rather than disturb it). It does nothing to mobilize anyone against imperialism. Instead, it complements the equally paralysing idealist claim, endorsed by Butler, which is that if we think Microsoft is already socialized then, *hey presto*, it is so. What fools those who want to change the world rather than simply reinterpret it are.

The good news, Butler tells us, is that the breakdown of capitalism has already occurred; so on a political level we arrive the long way round at the point where it is a matter 'not so much of changing the world into something else as of making the world the way it *already is*' (p. 97). Unlike other recent books on Zizek, this one seizes the opportunity to drive through the line of the author, and to push to breaking point some of the concepts Zizek plays with – relentlessly and pointlessly, as I am sure Butler would be happy to agree.

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