



Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, London: Verso, 2012, 1038pp

Saman Pushpakumara, *Katedra filosofie, FF MU*

It is a general known that Žižek is writing books faster than we could read them. *Less Than Nothing* is the most extensive book so far Žižek written, and it may be the largest book that has ever been written on Hegel. It is twice as big as Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and similar in size to Hegel's *Science of Logic*. The first sentence of Robert Pippin's review of *Less Than Nothing* is "It takes some courage to give a book this size the title *Less than Nothing*"¹. It is obvious that Žižek's book is serious, all encompassing, well-structured and coherent intellectual effort. By giving multiple examples from jokes, films and digressions Žižek has developed his Hegelo-Lacanianism with practical political implications of contemporary thinking. His expectation is to open a new materialist interpretation through reading Hegel.

Žižek employs an unusual structure in *Less Than Nothing*. As he puts it, "It was said (in the old days before smoking become stigmatized) that the second and the third most pleasurable things in the world were the drink before and the cigarette after. Accordingly, apart from the Hegelian Thing, *Less Than Nothing* also deals with a series of before (Plato, Christianity, Fichte) and after (Badiou, Heidegger, quantum physics)" (5-6). Part I, "The drink before" is devoted to Plato's *Parmenides*, Christianity, the death of God, and Fichte; Part II, The thing-in-itself: Hegel, and Part III, The thing-in-itself: Lacan; Part IV, "The cigarette after" is devoted to Heidegger, Levinas, Badiou and the ontology of quantum physics. The central body of the book is split in accordance with the axiom 'one divided into two'. Accordingly, Part I of the book is split into a part on Hegel and part on Lacan. It is repetition of Hegel. Here, Žižek has deployed four-step approach in each case. Regarding Hegel, he raises the question, "in what sense can one still be a Hegelian today". Then he moves to basic formulation of the dialectical process following Hegel's thesis that the "Absolute as not only Substance, but also Subject". Žižek's forth consideration is some limitations of Hegel. Regarding Lacan, he formulates the idea, "Lacan's theory as a repetition of Hegel". Here, he uncovers Lacan's references to Hegel, and he represents it as "Lacan as a reader of Hegel". Žižek emphasizes the concept, "suture" as the key aspect of signifying

¹ Pippin, 2013, p. 7.

process. Then he moves to the Lacanian concept of *object a*, the object generated by the signifying process. As final step, Žižek elucidates Lacanian notion of sexual difference and logic of non-All, and some limitations of Lacanian theory. In addition to fourteen chapters, the author includes six interludes, which are located between two central parts. These interludes basically deal with art, science, ideology and philosophers who argue against Hegel and Lacan. Three interludes have been devoted to Hegel: Marx as a reader of Hegel and Hegel as a reader of Marx, the concept of madness in the Hegel's theory of mind and rabble, sexuality and marriage. Regarding Lacan, the first interlude points towards retroactivity of the signifying process. The second interlude is against Quentin Meillassoux's critique of post-Kantian correlationism, and third interlude deals with limitations of the subjectivity in cognitive sciences. Žižek concludes the book with an elaboration on the derivations of Lacan's repetitions of Hegel.

To contextualize *Less Than Nothing* it is necessary to understand Žižek's total project and how he has developed his works since 1989. In *Conversation with Žižek* Glyn Daly says that "Žižek's work has been at the forefront of philosophical, political and cultural debate for more than a decade. From the theory of ideology to the critique of subjectivity, ethics, globalization, cyberspace, film studies, cognitivism, theology, music and opera, Žižek's influence extends far and wide and his interventions continue to provoke controversy and to transform the way we think about these and other topics"². Tony Myers, in *Slavoj Žižek*, says that "Žižek's work draws on three main areas of influence – philosophy, politics and psychoanalysis. In each of these disciplines, Žižek finds the larger part of his inspiration in the writings of a single individual: George Hegel for philosophy, Karl Marx for politics, and Jacques Lacan for psychoanalysis"³. In *Žižek: A Reader's Guide*, Kelsey Wood says that "Žižek utilizes Lacanian psychoanalytic concepts *in order to reinvent Hegelian dialectics*; he puts Lacanian theory to work in order to reactualize German idealism for the twenty-first century"⁴. Adrian Johnston, in *Žižek's Ontology: A Transcendental Materialist Theory of Subjectivity*, notes that "When Žižek declares that he employs, for instance, popular culture as a subservient vehicle for the (re) development of late-modern philosophy-with the "Many" of Žižek's examples ultimately serving the "One" of a project aiming at the "reactualization" (as Žižek himself puts it) of Kantian and German idealist thought through the mediation of Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalytic metapsychology—he is quite serious"⁵. Since the emergence of Žižek's first work, *Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), he has departed from the standard structuralist interpretation of Lacan and also has departed from orthodox reading of Hegel. In *Tarrying with Negative: Kant, Hegel and the Critique of Ideology* (1993), Žižek says that Hegelian dialectics implies fundamental movement of negativity that eludes any form of synthesis. Žižek, in *Ticklish Subject: The Absent Center of Political Ontology* (1999), claims that the specter of the Cartesian subject is haunting Western academia. Here, he

² Žižek and Daly, 2004, pp. 1–2.

³ Myers, 2003, p. 13.

⁴ Wood, 2012, p. 3.

⁵ Johnston, 2008, p. xiv.

emphasizes that the passage through madness is the constitutive of subjectivity as such. *Parallax View* (2006), according to Žižek his *magnum opus*, explores the parallax gap that emerged from two contradicting propositions which cannot be filled or fixed. Parallax gap is inherent to any form of symbolic formation. Žižek re-inscribes the German idealist theme of self-reflexive negativity in terms of Freudian concept of death drive. Death drive is the Real of subjectivity. In his project, Žižek addresses the basic problem of theory of knowledge, the distinction between how things seem to us opposed to how things really are (Kantian phenomenal-noumenal difference). According to Žižek, this distinction is utterly useless as there is no “things really are” because reality itself is incompletable. This is the heart of Žižek’s epistemological –ontological foundation. The most important thing is to understand the fact which Žižek has additionally developed in *Less Than Nothing*.

Žižek himself says that “*Less Than Nothing* is neither *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Hegel*, nor is it another university text book on Hegel, but it is something like *The Imbecile’s Guide to Hegel*” (3). The aim of the entire book is summarized in the final chapter as “So to conclude, let us recapitulate not only this chapter, but the focal point of the entire book by taking as starting point Ray Brassier’s question: ‘*How does thought think the death of thinking?*’ ” (953). Brassier’s real question raised in *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (2007) is “How does thought think a world without thought?”⁶. What Žižek tries to emphasize is that the ultimate is not between nothing and something, but between nothing (extinction) and less than nothing. As Žižek elaborates, “there is something instead of nothing” arises not because reality is in excess in comparison with mere nothing, but because reality is less than nothing. Žižek reads this ontological domain in various levels from quantum physics to psychoanalysis.

In *Less Than Nothing*, Žižek addresses in different aspects the questions raised against Hegel. The first question is the consideration of Hegel as hyper rationalist holist. Here, as Žižek insists, Hegel’s Absolute (according to Kant, unconditioned) has been criticized in different aspects. Hegel’s usage of this term made a great deal of confusions. Hegel uses the term Absolute as an adjective: Absolute Idea, Absolute knowing, Absolute Spirit etc. According to Schelling, Absolute is the indifferent point which exists beyond the distinction of subject and object, but in *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel criticizes Schelling’s conception of absolute as “the night in which all cows are black”⁷. For Hegel, the Absolute is active and dynamic whole, which is continually being reconstructed through finite beings. Through this concept Hegel addresses the old metaphysical question, “why is there anything at all rather than nothing”. We should keep it in our mind that the name of Žižek’s book is *Less Than Nothing*. In *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel formulates that the Absolute is “the process of its own becoming, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal, having its end also as its beginning; and only by being worked out to its end, is it actual” (10). Secondly, Hegel was criticized for being a philosopher of reconciliation. Here, the notion of “the end of history” in philosophy, politics art and religion is stressed. The notion of the end of history has not

⁶ Brassier, 2011, p. 223.

⁷ Hegel, 1977, p. 9.

originated with Hegel, but with Alexandre Kojève, and later, Francis Fukuyama popularized it. While Kojève believes that history has ended with Napoleon, Fukuyama ends history with liberal capitalism. But contrary to both of them, Hegel maintains that it is impossible for philosophy to predict future historical events. This contingency has been frequently emphasized in Žižek's book. Anglo American philosophers and scientific naturalists criticized Hegel's rationalist holism. In European philosophy, Hegel was accused of his "totalizing" rationalism. His critics pointed out that Hegel couldn't sufficiently cover the concrete human existence. Kierkegaard's idea was that concrete existence couldn't be placed in the totalizing system. Žižek aim is to do a justice against criticisms of Hegel and uncover the baselessness of these criticisms. While exposing not only Derridian but also Anglo American misreading of Hegel, Žižek was able to bring Hegel studies into a new domain.

The basic problem that the present book addresses is the ontological problem of subjectivity. According to Žižek, there are four current ideological-philosophical fields, which answer this question. They are: (1) Scientific naturalism (brain sciences, Darwinism); (2) discursive historicism (Foucault, deconstruction); (3) New Age "Western Buddhism"; and (4) transcendental finitude (culminating in Heidegger). Žižek's claim is that these four trends miss the pre-transcendental gap or rupture (Freudian name for that is the drive) (6-7). As Žižek emphasizes in the Introduction, Hegel's project is not to locate every phenomenon in harmonious totality, but to introduce crack, antagonism, and imbalance in the very heart of the totality. Though the four great German idealists, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel formulated the pre-transcendental gap in different ways they themselves misunderstood each other in this regard. For Žižek, all began with Kant's idea of transcendental construction of reality. Žižek, having vastly based on Deter Henrich's *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, puts forward the idea: "Kant was the inventor of the philosophical history of philosophy" (10). According to him, Kant's lesson is that philosophy structurally demands metaphysical illusions, and they are unavoidable. Truth does not overcome illusions, but is interconnected with illusions. The difference between Kant and Hegel is, as Žižek elaborates, while Kantian conception of illusion belongs to knowledge (phenomenon) and it is not applied to thing-in-itself, according to Hegel, thing-in-itself also consists of illusions. Hegel's ontology begins with pure Being which equals to Nothing. Schelling's negative philosophy also begins with affirmation of negation. In Schelling's philosophy, the negation or void is affirmative force of will's desire. Žižek's argument is that it is Schelling who introduces the radical gap, instability into pre-subjective ground. In this context, Žižek implies that the uniqueness of Hegel is his usage of Lacanian notion of "Lack of the Other" before Lacan. Hegelian epistemological-ontological mediation cannot be found in other great German idealists. Accordingly, Hegel has moved from epistemological obstacle to ontological failure, which is inscribed in thing-in itself.

Žižek specifically stresses the fact that the aim of *Less Than Nothing* is not simply to return to Hegel, but rather repeat Hegel (18). Žižek says that he himself, together with Mladen Dolar and Alenka Zupančič (members of the Lacanian school in Slovenia) read Hegel through Lacan and vice versa. All of them take Lacan as their undeconstructable point of reference

and unsurpassable horizon. As Žižek reveals, psychoanalysis and Hegelian dialectics are mutually embraced, and he strongly recommends Alain Badiou's idea in *Manifesto for Philosophy* that "the anti-philosopher Lacan is a condition of the renaissance of philosophy. A philosophy is possible today only if it is compatible with Lacan" (18). Žižek proposes a radical emancipatory politics, which passes through Lacan.

Žižek's attention is given to three great minds of philosophy: Plato, Descartes and Hegel. As he puts it, the entire philosophical history was unable to transcend these three philosophical figures. Both analytical and contemporary philosophies are a response to Hegel. Žižek rereads Plato's deep insight that Ideas are not the hidden reality beneath appearance, but hidden reality is ever changing corrupted matter. Here, Žižek relates Plato to Lacan. Lacan's concept is that super sensible is appearance as appearance. For Žižek, Plato's mistake is ontologization of Ideas as Descartes' ontologization of the *Cogito*. Žižek's point is that "the distinction between appearance and essence has to be inscribed into appearance itself" (37). The essence is nothing but appearance reflected into itself. As he puts it, "everything that appears ultimately appears out of nothing" (37). Therefore, appearance is nothing in itself. Having cited Hegel's *Science of Logic*, "Being only is as the movement of nothing to nothing, and as such is essence", Žižek responds to the early metaphysical question, "why is something there rather than nothing". The specialty of Žižek's identification of nothing as contradiction, antagonism or tension is his decision to place nothing against Oriental concept of void, the eternal peace. The Real of the antagonism causes the perspectival distortion of itself. Unlike Buddhist ontology, Žižek's problem is not to overcome the split, but to accept the gap of negation not as a problem but as a solution. Buddhism also considers the void at the core of our being. The basic enigma, that Buddhism couldn't understand, and which according to Žižek, is its blind spot, is how and why one falls into the Wheel of Life (according to Buddhism, *samsara*); what really resists against Enlightenment or "traversing fantasy" (according to Buddhism, *nirvana*). For Žižek, the answer is Freudian *drive*. The main point Žižek formulates against Buddhist perspective is as follows; "The drive, on the contrary, goes on even when the subject has "traversed the fantasy" and broken out of its illusory craving for the (lost) object of desire. And therein lies the difference between Buddhism and psychoanalysis, reduced to its formal minimum: for Buddhism, after Enlightenment (or "traversing the fantasy"), the Wheel no longer turns, the subject de-subjectivizes itself and finds peace; for psychoanalysis, on the other hand, *the wheel continues to turn*, and this continued turning-of-the wheel is the drive (as Lacan puts it in the pages of *Seminar XI*: after the subject traverses the fantasy, desire is transformed into drive)" (131). It is obvious that Buddhist scholars have to answer Žižek's major criticism pointed towards the very heart of Buddhism, but so far no criticism has been formulated against Žižek's argument.

The second chapter, "Fichte's Choice" is Žižek's major second critical engagement with Fichte after the third chapter, "Fichte's Laughter" in *Mythology, Madness and Laughter* (2009). Žižek basically pays attention to Fichte's later philosophy. The aim of Fichte's early subjective-idealist approach is to denounce the illusion of objective reality which exists out there independently of subject; subject is the part of reality. But as Žižek puts it, "The late

Fichte's Absolute is an immovable transcendent In-itself, external to movement of reflection" (143). What he is unable to grasp is the fact that the Absolute's appearing is not mere appearance, but a self-revelation, of the Absolute, and Fichte, as the philosopher of subjective self-positing, reduces subjectivity to a mere appearance of immovable absolute in itself. Accordingly, Fichte couldn't grasp the Hegelian point, "Substance also as Subject". But Žižek uncovers some revolutionary aspects of Fichte's later philosophy. Accordingly, the existence of external reality in which subject itself is a part of that reality, is not a theoretical fact but a practical necessity, and it is necessary presupposition when subject practically intervenes into reality.

As Žižek elucidates, Fichte's concept of *Anstoss* has two German meaning: "check, obstacle, hindrance, something that resists the boundless expansion of our striving; and an impetus or stimulus, something that incites our activity"(150). Žižek's comparison is if Kantian *Ding an sich* corresponds to Freudian-Lacanian Thing, *Anstoss* is compared with Lacan's concept of *objet petit a* which is primordial non-graspable foreign body at the very heart of subjectivity. The *Anstoss* is a non-positing element in Fichtean sense. It is like "bone in the throat" which prevents the direct expression of the subject, and subject is none other than the failure of its own direct expression. As Žižek theorizes, subject is not-All, the gap, and *Anstoss* is the positivization of this gap (175). For Kant, the Thing-in-itself is the external limitation of phenomenal sphere constituted by subject itself. But Fichte's point is that the subject's external limit is its own internal limitation. Žižek summarizes his total understanding of German idealism within two sentences: "In other words, there is no unilateral progress in German idealism: each of its four great names (Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel) struggled with fundamental problem and ultimately failed to resolve it, but this does not mean that each linear successor resolved his predecessor's problem in move *Aufhebung*—rather, the successor radically changed the field, so that the problem itself disappeared. Fichte "missed the point" of Kant's thought; Schelling and Hegel "missed the point" of Fichte's (and of each other's)" (187–188).

"Is it still possible to be a Hegelian Today?" is the first chapter of Part II of the book. Against Christian doctrine Hegel's claim is that what is beyond finite reality (Other World in Christian sense) is nothing but the immanent process of its self-overcoming. Hegel's dialectical version is different from the dialectics popularized by Marxists from Engels to Stalin and Mao. These dialectical notions inherently expect "external enemy" as "anti-thesis", but according to Hegel, the true enemy is not the enemy we are fighting but our own finitude. That is why prominence is given to self-contradiction in Hegelian dialectics over the external obstacle or enemy. Fighting against external enemy is fighting against one's own essence. As Žižek explores, there is no historical necessity in dialectical process for its own actualization, and therefore, no historicist justification of a particular politics at a certain stage. If one wants to be a Hegelian today he/she should accept the notion that, "In the dialectical analysis of history, on the contrary, each new "stage" "rewrites the past" and retroactively de-legitimizes the previous one" (219). There is no God who writes history in advance, and no agent who watches over its realization, and truth emerges through its own process of development. If we

put it in Žižek's own words, "...as dusk falls over the events of the day, *the owl of Minerva will take wing*, that there always is a story to be told at the end..." (224). Hegel's dialectical process is not saturated and fixed self-contained necessary Whole, but contingent process.

"Marx as a reader of Hegel" is the usual approach in Marxist critique of Hegel since Marx own time, but "Hegel as a reader of Marx" is an unusual Žižek's practice in *Less Than Nothing*. Žižek's point is to understand the global capitalism Marx should be radicalized through Hegelian terms. Marx himself referred to Hegelian dialectics having oscillated between two extremes whether Hegel's dialectics is to be used in understanding mystified behavior of capital or model for the revolutionary process of emancipation. As Žižek insists, after the failure of the 1848 revolutions, Marx read Hegel's *Science of Logic* and used Hegelian dialectics for the formulation of the logic of the capital. The problem that has arisen here is how far does Hegelian theory helped in understanding post-Hegelian reality and speculative aspect of capitalist economy. Moreover, Hegelian notion of "reconciliation" between subject and substance is not proposing some primordial being beyond or beneath subject/object division, but accepting radical lack as foundational point. Žižek identifies and rejects two versions of the critique of Hegelian dialectics as such: firstly, dismissing the subjective mediation of all substantial content as irreducibly "idealist" and proposing to replace it with radically different approaches like Althusser's structural over-determination, Deleuze's difference and repetition, Derrida's *différance*, Adorno's negative dialectics, and secondly, misreading Hegel as "idealist" which ignores the true subversive core of Hegel's dialectics. Žižek formulates his position as follows: "This is our position: the Hegel of the absolute Subject swallowing up all objective content is a retroactive fantasy of his critics, starting with Schelling's turn to "positive philosophy". This "positivity" is found also in the young Marx, in the guise of the Aristotelian reassertion of positive forces or potentials of Being pre-existing logical or notional mediation" (261). What Žižek wants to emphasize is that Hegel's Absolute Knowing *does* involve a "less", and it refers to a constitutive lack of both in Other itself and subject's lack of knowing.

Less Than Nothing is not only exploring Hegel's "positivity of negativity", but also disclosing "the limits of Hegel". Using Mladen Dolar's list, Žižek implies the themes that Hegel "cannot think". This fact is also summarized by Daniel Tutt, in his review of *Less than Nothing* as follows⁸: repetition (the movement of contingency); unconscious (though Hegel can think the unconscious, it is only as a formal transcendental); the truth and *jouissance* (the problem of *jouissance* is irreducible to truth); the problem of mathematics (Hegel tells us math can't conceive the truth of infinity); antagonism (parallax); *object petit a* (this is the basic motivation of *Less Than Nothing*); and sexual difference (Hegel's ignorance of Lacan's radical explanation of sexual difference). Žižek's idea is that it is only through Freud and Lacan that Hegel's concept of negativity can be radicalized. What precedes Nothing is less than nothing, and it is Lacanian *object a* which is in excess regards to the consistency of something. Žižek's conclusion is "The time has thus come to repeat *Hegel*"(504).

⁸ Tutt, 2012.

Žižek addresses one of the main contemporary philosophical themes in Part III: correlationism. As Žižek elaborates his argument, *Less Than Nothing* is a critical response to Quentin Meillassoux's speculative realism developed in *After Finitude* (2008). Speculative realism is the philosophical form raised against post-Kantian correlationism, which was formulated by Ray Brassier, Ian Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman and Meillassoux. As Meillassoux puts it, "By 'correlation' we mean the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other"⁹. The ultimate horizon of subjectivity is that of our finitude. For Graham Harman, "Authors working in the continental tradition have generally claimed to stand beyond the traditional dispute between realism ('reality exists outside our mind') and idealism ('reality exists only in mind'). The correlationist alternative, so dominant that it is often left unstated by its adherents, is to assume that we can think neither of human without world nor of world without human, but only of a primordial correlation or rapport between the two"¹⁰. By assessing Meillassoux's critique of transcendental idealism, Žižek says that *After Finitude* can be read as 21st century Lenin's version of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, and according to Žižek, Meillassoux has been trapped in Kantian-transcendental opposition between reality as appears to us and the reality in itself independently of us. Meillassoux's point is that we can access and think about reality in itself. But Žižek's radical Hegelo-Lacanian response is, "The problem is not to think the Real outside of transcendental correlation, independently of the subject; the problem is to think the Real *inside* the subject, the hard core of the Real in the very heart of the subject, its ex-timate center" (644). Meillassoux has dismissed the transcendental position that the reality is always transcendently constituted. The reason for not being able to access the reality is that we are part of reality. The notion "objectively exists" is the entire sphere of interaction between subject and object as part of the Real.

"The Ontology of Quantum Physics" is the final chapter of *Less than Nothing*, and it is the second time Žižek addresses this field after "Quantum Physics with Lacan" in *The Indivisible Remainder* (1996). As Žižek understands it, the theoretical conclusion in Copenhagen interpretation explores an epistemological break of modern physics, and which is to be correlated to an ontological shift. The difference between Heisenberg's uncertainty principle and Niels Bohr's complementarity theory represents the difference between mere epistemological and fully ontological incompleteness. Žižek's aim is to give a Hegelo-Lacanian solution for the epistemological and ontological shock created by quantum physics. Žižek's interpretation is "In a properly Hegelian way, then, it is our very epistemological limitation which locates us in the Real: what appears as the limitation of our knowledge is the feature of reality itself, its "non-All"" (925). According to Žižek, "the mind creates reality" or "there is no reality independent of our mind" is a subjective idealist perspective that derives from quantum physics, and it is false. The true implications of quantum physics is its opposite, our knowledge of reality is included in reality itself. Bohr's perspective is not that

⁹ Meillassoux, 2008, p. 5.

¹⁰ Harman, 2011, p. 2.

reality is subjective, but the observing subject is part of the reality we observe. The most radical expression which Žižek makes is “In short, the implicit lesson of Bohr’s reflections amount to a *materialist* critique of the naïve-realist epistemology and ontology of Lenin’s *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* with its notion of knowledge as an (always imperfect) “reflection” of the objective reality existing independently of us” (932).

Žižek’s *Less Than Nothing* is nothing but a continuation of Hegelo-Lacanianism, which initiated in *Sublime Object of Ideology*. The strongest point of *Less Than Nothing* is convincing ability of Žižek’s epistemological-ontological approach to encompass not only modern philosophical themes like *Cogito* and post-Kantianism, but also contemporary philosophical developments like speculative realism, cognitivism, Western Buddhism and quantum physics. As Pippin points out in his review, some readings simply point to the fact that no one has succeeded in writing *Part II* of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* including the developments after 1831 such as emergence of mass consumer society, the cultural industry, rise of Nazism, Stalin’s crimes and communist China full of billionaires. But if it is closely examined, we can reveal Žižek has already completed “*Part II*” of *the Phenomenology of Spirit* which have encompassed above mentioned historical developments based on Hegelian terms. Pippin himself questions the unusual feature of Žižek’s heavy reliance on selected secondary sources with few exceptions. Specifically Pippin mentions that Žižek follows Fichte through recently published undergraduate lectures given by Deter Henrich at Harvard University. But David S. Pacini, the editor of the given book, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism* (2003) says that “Even though Henrich had worked largely from memory, his lectures nevertheless provided detailed accounts of philosophical materials largely unknown to all save a few”¹¹. Moreover, Henrich had already established reputation for path-breaking scholarship on Kant, Fichte, Hölderlin and Hegel. In addition to that, we should keep in mind that Žižek has already mentioned that *Less Than Nothing* is not another university textbook on Hegel. In 1989, in the preface of Žižek’s *Sublime Object of Ideology*, Ernesto Laclau noted that Slovenian Lacanian School has used Lacanian categories for analyzing classical philosophical texts: Plato, Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, Marx, Heidegger, the Anglo-Saxon analytical tradition and above all Hegel. Here, Laclau says Žižek drew too drastic a line of separation between Lacanian theory and post-structuralism. Žižek has already challenged the most dominant 20th century philosophical tradition, post-structuralism through Hegelo-Lacanianism. As Žižek puts it in *Less Than Nothing*, poststructuralist deconstructionism does not exist in itself in France, but it was invented by American academic gaze. It is not a category of French philosophy, but a category of American (miss) reception of the French theory. Without falling in to Oriental wisdom in which primordial void stands for eternal peace, and which serves as neutral abyss between the opposite poles Žižek defends Hegelian standpoint, the void, abyssal gap or parallax as tension, antagonism or impossibility¹². In Žižek’s overall project, he defends philosophy against natural sciences. Here, Žižek exposes Stephan Hawking’s mistake, his claim that “philosophy is dead” which

¹¹ Henrich, 2008, p. xi.

¹² See Fritjof Capra’s *The Tao of Physics* (1975) to understand how modern physics falls into oriental wisdom.

he has stated in his *The Grand Design*. Hawking's expressions reminds us about logical positivists' elimination of philosophy in favour of science. Hawking makes this comment with reference to latest advances in quantum physics and cosmology. But Žižek's aim is to show continuing pertinence of philosophy, and he says Hawking's book itself relies on series of methodological and ontological presuppositions taken for granted. However, the final chapter, "The Ontology of Quantum Physics" distorts the consistency of Žižek's dialectical/transcendental materialism. Here, what Žižek tries to do is to confirm materialism through quantum physics. But the point is that materialism cannot be developed, refuted or confirmed through physics. Adrian Johnston in his *Adventures in Transcendental Materialism: Dialogues with Contemporary Thinkers* (2014), especially in 7th chapter "Spirit is a Quark: Quantum Physics with Žižek", has already questioned Žižek's deviation. In addition to that, in the interview with Graham Harman, Johnston strongly defends his position which is different from Žižek. He explains his different position as "inner party disputes", and his critique as "immanent rather than external ones (as entirely appropriate between Hegelians)", and "Žižekian critique of Žižek himself". According to Johnston, in the question of quantum physics Žižek has violated the parameter of his own ontology and his dialectical theories of subjectivity, and Žižek is in danger of reinforcing a reductivist program. Žižek should rethink his approach to quantum physics for the defense of his own system.

References

- Brassier, R. *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)
- Capra, F. *The Tao of Physics: An Explanation of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (Boulder: Shambhala Publication, 1975)
- Harman, G. *Quentin Meillassoux: Philosophy in the Making* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2011)
- Hegel, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Trans. A.V.Miller (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1977)
- Henrich, D. *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003)
- Johnston, A. <http://progressivegeographies.com/2014/04/18/adrian-johnston-interviewed-by-graham-harman/>
- Johnston, A. *Žižek's Ontology: A Transcendental Materialist Theory of Subjectivity* (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 2008)
- Mayers, T. *Slavoj Žižek* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003)

Meillassoux, Q. *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, Trans. R. Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008)

Pippin, R. "Back to Hegel" in *Meditation* 26.1-2 (Fall 2012-Spring 2013) 7-28

Tutt, D. <http://danieltutt.com/2012/07/14/on-zizeks-less-than-nothing-and-determinate-negation-in-google-ideas/>

Wood, K. *Žižek: A Reader's Guide* (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012)

Žižek, S. and G. Daly. *Conversation with Žižek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)