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On Practice And Contradiction (Revolutions Series): Slavoj Žizek Presents Mao



Synopsis

These early philosophical writings underpinned the Chinese revolutions and their clarion calls to insurrection remain some of the most stirring of all time. Drawing on a dizzying array of references from contemporary culture and politics, Zizek's firecracker commentary reaches unsettling conclusions about the place of Mao's thought in the revolutionary canon.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This seems to me the greatest disappointment by far in Verso's new Revolutions series. This series seeks, laudably, to reintroduce and reinterpret some past titans of left political thought, pairing classic texts with new introductions for a new era; but this Mao volume instead reproduces the most hackneyed, thoughtless stereotypes of Mao both in praising and blaming him. Slavoj Zizek's introduction to this volume, which will be many readers' main reason for buying the book, might be expected to be something like the substantial and interesting essay that accompanied his selection of Lenin from Verso. Instead, this introduction is one of the worst pieces of Zizek's career (and I say this as a great fan of the Slovenian thinker). This shallow piece, obviously dashed off to meet a deadline, completely misses the opportunity to reassess Mao's actual writing (and political actions) in a new historical moment. Instead of, for example, reading Mao's theory of contradiction as a still-useful political concept (as Althusser did, much more thoughtfully, in the 1970s), Zizek reproduces and embraces some of the cheapest old anticommunist chestnuts (Mao as "mass murderer," Mao as absolutist, Mao as totalitarian) in the interest of giving a "contrarian" defense of

the Chairman's utility to radicals.

the thoughts of Mao, were first of all a good place of political study, the Badiouian "Truth" moment for it was the bridge to Third World revolutions, in SouthEast Asia, Phillipines, Burma, Mao thought Vietnam was the beginning to Washington's attack of China itself, no great political clairvoyance for the Helmsman; trouble also was Mao didn't know theory, he refused to comprehend contradiction, in its original Hegelian formations, instead adopting the most naive, simplistic dimensions of dialectic; he simply utilized a hammer to crush the other side of negativity, hence study the failures of The Cultural Revolution, or the Great Leap Forwards, (which of course was Backwards monstrously) and if you read Zizek carefully he says this, Mao doesn't need to relish in the finer points of translation, we get it! first all of his theoretical writings were for rhetorical affect, effect, for Chinese Party functionaries insiders, the upper echelons; the internal cadre, not intended for the great unwashed, the peasants; there was another party line, so goes Stalinism which Mao practiced, there were lines and "other" lines always with a neurotic fear of all that exists; Badiou as well spends time with Mao's thought as a science, but only within his own theories of Event, Truth, which Mao etc, but not only Mao but the context of China for world revolution, you need to get away from all this infallibility paradigms, Mao's genius was in inverse relation to his overwhelming blindnesses, A Thousand Blindnesses, things he refused to comprehend, like the function of the state, and the role of the party in relation to it, and foreign affairs as well, and how peasant cadre functioned together.

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