**A brief introduction to Slavoj Zizek and Zizek’s “The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema”**

“Slavoj Žižek is a Slovenian-born political philosopher and cultural critic. He was described by British literary theorist, Terry Eagleton, as the “most formidably brilliant” recent theorist to have emerged from Continental Europe.

Žižek’s work is infamously idiosyncratic. It features striking dialectical reversals of received common sense; a ubiquitous sense of humor; a patented disrespect towards the modern distinction between high and low culture; and the examination of examples taken from the most diverse cultural and political fields. Yet Žižek’s work, as he warns us, has a very serious philosophical content and intention. He challenges many of the founding assumptions of today’s left-liberal academy, including the elevation of difference or otherness to ends in themselves, the reading of the Western Enlightenment as implicitly totalitarian, and the pervasive skepticism towards any context-transcendent notions of truth or the good.

One feature of Žižek’s work is its singular philosophical and political reconsideration of German Idealism. Žižek has also reinvigorated the challenging psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, controversially reading him as a thinker who carries forward founding modernist commitments to the Cartesian subject and the liberating potential of self-reflective agency, if not self-transparency. Žižek’s works since 1997 have become more and more explicitly political, contesting the widespread consensus that we live in a post-ideological or post-political world, and defending the possibility of lasting changes to the new world order of globalization, the end of history, or the war on terror.”--**Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy**

“‘The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema’ is neither perverted in the typical sense, nor truly a cinematic guide… It is, furthermore, only technically a film, more closely resembling a video-essay/interview hybrid. . . . With a thick Slavic accent and wild gesticulations ..., the whiskered, bespectacled Zizek leads us through a collection of movie clips, aligning the language of cinema with that of philo-psychoanalysis via narration.”***--Slant***

“Zizek's central thesis ... is that the forces that created the world of "reality" -- God, evolution, however you choose to conceive them -- have left it unfinished and in less than optimal working condition. ... The world is broken and incomplete (and unstable, forever changing), and fantasy (in every sense of the word) is necessary to complete our experience of reality. That's where the cinema comes in, as the form that most closely resembles and reflects our own (sub-)consciousness. We are limited in our exposure to reality (through our senses and our brains and our emotions) -- there's no such thing as direct contact with "reality" -- and so, the movies provide the necessary "phantasmic space" in the place of the abyss.”--**Jim Emerson**

“The art of cinema consists in arousing desire, to play with desire, but at the same time keeping it at a safe distance. Domesticating it. Rendering it palpable… The problem for us is not: Are our desires satisfied or not. The problem is how do we know what we desire? There is nothing spontaneous, nothing natural about human desire. Our desires are artificial. We have to be taught to desire. Cinema is the ultimate pervert art. It doesn’t give you what you desire. It tells you how to desire.”—**Zizek**