



Violence: Six Sideways Reflections (Big Ideas/Small Books)

By Slavoj Zizek

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Philosopher, cultural critic, and agent provocateur Slavoj Žižek constructs a fascinating new framework to look at the forces of violence in our world.

Using history, philosophy, books, movies, Lacanian psychiatry, and jokes, Slavoj Žižek examines the ways we perceive and misperceive violence. Drawing from his unique cultural vision, Žižek brings new light to the Paris riots of 2005; he questions the permissiveness of violence in philanthropy; in daring terms, he reflects on the powerful image and determination of contemporary terrorists.

Violence, Žižek states, takes three forms--subjective (crime, terror), objective (racism, hate-speech, discrimination), and systemic (the catastrophic effects of economic and political systems)--and often one form of violence blunts our ability to see the others, raising complicated questions.

Does the advent of capitalism and, indeed, civilization cause more violence than it prevents? Is there violence in the simple idea of "the neighbour"? And could the appropriate form of action against violence today simply be to contemplate, to think?

Beginning with these and other equally contemplative questions, Žižek discusses the inherent violence of globalization, capitalism, fundamentalism, and language, in a work that will confirm his standing as one of our most erudite and incendiary modern thinkers.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this provocative and brilliantly argued work, philosopher Zizek takes readers on an intellectual and artistic tour—drawing upon Picasso's *Guernica*, Alfred Hitchcock and M. Night Shyamalan's films, Michel Houellebecq's novels, jokes, Lacanian psychology and a Kantian analysis of Hurricane Katrina—to demonstrate how societies understand, obscure and deny the sources of violence. His is not an examination of offenses but an argument that violence can perhaps be best defined by the bystanders and not by its perpetrators or victims. Zizek enumerates the varieties of violence (subjective, objective, systemic) and how it inheres in language, economics and religion, urging readers to discern the violence that sustains our very efforts to fight violence and to promote tolerance. In meditations on the events of 9/11, the Abu Ghraib scandal and the 2005 Paris riots, the book turns numerous familiar arguments on their ear (he proposes that the guards at Abu Ghraib represent the true underside of American society). His unrelenting scrutiny and host of cultural and literary references dazzle, and this bracing and rewarding read will challenge anyone unwilling to recognize his or her complicity in systems of institutional and interpersonal violence. (Aug.)

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Review

Praise for Slavoj Žižek

"The Elvis of cultural theory."--"The Chronicle of Higher Education"

"The most formidably brilliant exponent of psychoanalysis, indeed of cultural theory in general, to have emerged in Europe for some decades."--Terry Eagleton, "The London Review of Books

"A one-person culture mulcher . . . a fast-forward philosopher of culture for the post-war period."--"The Village Voice"

"[Žižek] stares out, disheveled, from the page and dares the reader to disagree. . . . As always, he combines the fruitfully combative, the densely intelligent, and the merely glib, sometimes in the same paragraph."--Steven Poole, "The Guardian" (UK)

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From the Inside Flap

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Alicia Gentry:

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