

## ISSUE

Slavoj Žižek, while popular, is seldom seriously engaged with in academic circles and understood.

# THE VEIL OF APPEARANCE: ŽIŽEK'S HEGEL

## AN EXPLICATORY PAPER

## MOTIVE

Carefully engage with the modernist movements in order to orient contemporary work.

1

### Philosophical Setup

- Essence vs. Appearance: Philosophers concerned with how/to what extent can we know what something is (ontologically) based on how it appears?
- Plato: True essence lies in abstract forms, not their physical manifestations.
- Rationalists: Utilizing reason to build complex ontological theories, and answer philosophical questions.
- Hume's Critique: Casts doubt on capability of knowledge— cannot know "cause", just constant conjunction  
→ Reason and experience alone never reveals the structure of reality.

Core Insight: Western philosophy begins with a question: How does what we perceive relate to what is real? And is truth found behind appearances—or through them?

2

### German Idealism

How do we know and what follows for the known?

- Kant's Revolution: Perceiving reality determines its experiential structure.  
→ Categories like causality and space-time are filters of experience.  
→ The noumenon (thing-in-itself) exists, but we can never access it directly.
- Reality is shaped by how we perceive and process it—making the mind an active participant in constructing the world.
- Hegel : Takes Kant's insight further. Reality (Spirit) requires appearance (phenomena).  
→ Not simply that we fail to grasp noumena but that noumena can arise only through its appearances.  
→ Phenomenology is the process of Spirit's self-becoming and recognition.

Core Insight: Hegel rotates Kant— appearance isn't just a barrier to truth, but also the only medium through which truth returns to itself (its phenomenology).

3

### Žižek / Appearance qua Appearance

- Žižek's Inversion: While Kant claims reality is unknowable, Žižek argues the cracks in reality are also part of reality.  
→ Contradictions aren't only errors, they structure Reality as it appears.
- The Spurious Thing-in-Itself: Postmodern thinkers (Foucault, Chomsky) deny universal truth yet rely on truth to do so.  
→ We cannot do away with a universal theory of what is "real".
- Appearance reveals by covering up; appearance qua appearance.
- →The Christian God Example: Christ promises: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."  
→ God is present only through the shared act of belief and recognition.  
→ The divine functions precisely through absence, not in spite of it.

Core Insight: Reality (like God or "the Real") does not appear directly, only as appearance raised to its truth.