To begin with a joke, the world history may have ended in 1806 at the battle of Jena where Napoleon defeated the Prussian Army, but, ironically, it was re-opened with a new reading of Hegel in one of the most provincial places on Earth in one of the most hollow periods of its history, in Ljubljana in the late 1970s. Hegel, the famous testamentary executor of history, thus became a godfather to its new beginning. Or, to put it more modestly, the theoretical aspiration of the Ljubljana School of Psychoanalysis is to make use of Hegel’s philosophy in order to rigorously re-examine not only the Hegelian concepts of teleology, absolute knowledge, providence, cunning of reason, or absolute religion, but also of all the concepts of Nietzsche’s, Heidegger’s, or of the proponents of linguistic turn and postmodernism, the concepts of eternal recurrence, Geschick, the open processes of language games and deconstructions, to name just a few. It could be said that the only way to restart history, which had ended according to Hegel, was to end the post-Hegelian end of grand narratives.

The almost Socratic, elenctic method of the Ljubljana School consists in the endeavour to detect the fallacy of every position which makes it too easy for itself, be it the great metaphysical closures of the past or the post-metaphysical ironic and paralogical self-indulgences of recent times. Perhaps, this stance could be best expressed by a number of paradoxes. The fact that history never ended does not make its openness any less simplistic and platitudinous. The fact that God died is not an argument in favour of paganism. The fact that truth is not like a stamped coin is not the reason to consider “truth” to be an obsolete notion. The fact that there is no afterlife does not elevate death into the absolute horizon of our existence. In other words, against the “bad infinites” of pragmatics and postmodernism, the Slovene Hegelians advocate definite, historically determinate actions and incisions, and against the existentialist and hermeneutic pathos of finitude, they plead the infinite and universal dimension of ethics and truth.

Ljubljana School of Psychoanalysis is undoubtedly the most prominent event in the history of Slovene philosophy: it put our small country on the map of world philosophy. The crucial invention of two of its co-founders, Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar, was to combine such seemingly disparate scientific traditions as Hegel’s and Marx’s philosophy, structuralism, and Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Against the abstract moral rigorism
of Kant’s ethics, Hegel is to this day routinely regarded and exploited as a philosopher of some sort of conciliatory particularity, of down-to-earth morality of family life, civic duties, social normality, and even of servility to the state. In contrast, the Ljubljana reading insists emphatically on the speculative, idealist, reflexive, systemic, and dialectical edge of his philosophy because it believes that only a return to the most unworldly core of the Hegelian logic can provide impulses for the opening of new perspectives on the concreteness of our historical, social, and political situation. Instead of discerning from Hegel’s work the elements of recognition, reconciliation, education, progress, the “Ljubljana Hegel” rather stresses the most extravagant episodes of his thought: master-slave dialectic, infinite judgments, beautiful soul and the forgiveness of evil, the reflection of essence and shine, the death of Christ on the cross, the monarch, etc. And the five contributions to this edition of Filozofija i društvo make the best example of the specifically Slovene attempt to institute a new Hegelian absolutism.

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