

The Real and the Human Imbricated... Žižek and Zubiri vs. Miller*

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Abstract

This article reflects on how the issue of the Real allows us to rethink the human of today in a more complete and up-to-date way. And for this purpose, two apparently dissimilar perspectives of understanding the Real are discussed: that of the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, which is rooted in Lacan's psychoanalysis, and that of the Spanish philosopher Xavier Zubiri, which is born from a deep critical dialogue with Heidegger's ontology. This paper will show the unity of two visions of the Real that lie at the heart of what is human and that allow us to criticize certain very influential psychoanalytic thought, centred on Jacques-Alain Miller, which cannot account for what is happening to us radically in the current era, or, perhaps, in any era.

Keywords: Žižek; Zubiri; Lacan; Miller; Zupančič; the Real

Resum. *Allò Real i allò humà imbricat... Žižek i Zubiri vs. Miller*

Aquest article reflexiona sobre com la qüestió d'allò Real ens permet repensar allò humà d'avui d'una manera més completa i actual. I per a això es discuteixen dues perspectives aparentment dissímils d'entendre allò Real: la del filòsof eslovè Slavoj Žižek, que enfonsa les seves arrels en la psicoanàlisi de Lacan, i la del filòsof espanyol Xavier Zubiri, que neix d'un profund diàleg crític amb l'ontologia de Heidegger. Aquest treball mostrarà la unitat de dues visions d'allò Real que es troben al cor d'allò humà i que permeten criticar un cert pensament psicoanalític molt influent, centrat en Jacques-Alain Miller, que no pot explicar el que ens està succeint radicalment a l'època actual o, tal vegada, en qualsevol època.

Paraules clau: Žižek; Zubiri; Lacan; Miller; Zupančič; allò Real

Summary

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Epigraphs

Many amazing things exist, and yet nothing more amazing than man. He goes to the other side of the white sea with the help of the tempestuous South wind, under the roaring waves advancing, and to the mightiest of the goddesses, to the imperishable and indefatigable Earth, he works without rest, turning the plows year after year, by plowing it with mules.

(Sophocles, 2000: 331-340)

When, moreover, it is said of the spirit that it is, that it has a being, that it is a thing, a singular reality, one does not thereby assume something that can be seen or taken in hand, stumbled upon, etc., but one does say that; and what is truly said is thus expressed by saying that the being of the spirit is a bone.

(Hegel, 1966: 206)

Is it not that I come to meet others in my life because others have first come into my life? [...] I mean that others, before they come to me in my experience or before I go to them, are already in my life. That is the only reason why I can find them coming to me or me going to them.

(Zubiri, 2006: 43)

1. Introduction

The Ljubljana or Slovenian “School” (Espinoza, 2020; Espinoza and Barroso, 2018) has been able to consider the human from a very different perspective to other, so to speak, European philosophical “Schools” (to give these institutions some kind of name: Essex, Freiburg, Frankfurt, Paris, etc.) because it has overcome, among other things, the prejudice of understanding the philosophical as something closed in itself, and has thus been able to connect philosophy with social sciences, cultural studies and, especially, psychoanalysis. (Psychoanalysis, as a theory, is a kind of ontology of the sexed human; for example, it is Lacan’s great correction to his beloved Heidegger, and the neutral, asexual *Dasein* of his *Sein und Zeit* of 1927). And the Madrid School, centered on Ortega and with Zubiri at its head as its great dauphin, was always against a philosophy with universal and systematic overtones which abandoned the body in favour of an abstract and “neutral” self. The Madrid School, subsequently through Zambrano and other thinkers, reaches into the present day throughout Spain and Latin America; and reflects critically on the body and weak reason (far removed from the Anglo-Saxon, German, etc.): vital reason (Ortega), sentient reason (Zubiri), poetic reason (Zambrano),

cordial reason (Cortina), etc. And this Madrid School, like Lacan and psychoanalysis and with it the Slovenians (and, especially, Žižek), criticizes the Heidegger of *Sein und Zeit* (and before that Husserl and his phenomenology) because in *Dasein* the body does not occur and, therefore, neither does life nor effective death; and neither does the Other (Soto and Espinoza, 2015; Espinoza, 2018).

With the Slovenians, moreover, not only is Kant's thought at stake, but Hegel also appears as a manifestation of the philosophy that is at the height of the event of the human in our time: this is the great work of the Slovenians today. And for the Slovenians it is a Hegel who is now founded, primarily, on the *Science of Logic* (*Wissenschaft der Logik*), but without ever renouncing the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*) and the young Hegel; and from the hand of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis, via the interpretation of Lacan's "translator", Jacques-Alain Miller (Miller, 2011), where the category of the Real becomes a radical interpretative key of the human over the symbolic. (Incidentally, the Real is not even a category). If there is another Hegel for the Slovenians, centred on the Logical, there is also another Lacan, centred on the Real (and there also wants to be another Lacan, at least in Žižek, with respect to Miller's interpretation of the Real); and Badiou explains it very well in his *Logics of the World*:

In truth, there is another Kant, dramatized, modernized, displaced towards contemporary politics and towards Lacan's teaching. A 'Kant with Marx and Lacan', which is a Slovenian creation. We must salute the Slovenian School of philosophy, totally original, and of which I have been an interlocutor, with great pleasure, for many years. Like any true school, it has known splits and animosities. But I, far from Ljubljana, can greet at least once, jointly, Rado Riha, Jelica Šumič, Slavoj Žižek, Alenka Zupančič and all their friends. It is to this School that we owe an entirely new vision of the great German idealism, attuned to a post-Marxist political theory (all these Slovenian thinkers participated, in their own way, in socialist Yugoslavia, and all of them were readers of Althusser), a political theory that depends, in turn, on a reading of Lacan whose effect is centred, not so much on the force of language as on the untenable radiance of the real. (Badiou, 2008: 590)

And Badiou is right in showing how the Slovenians think from a Lacanism of the Real, although he brings the discussion around to his own interests with that reference to the heirs of Althusser, since he himself connects with the Slovenians; and he does not sufficiently emphasise the importance of Hegel to them.

And, with the Madrilenians, something similar happens; not only is Kant present, but Hegel appears and with him the translations and the fundamental role of history and of the absoluteness of freedom that pierces everything: even the modern European "I" itself. And, in addition, although Freud is not present, Nietzsche is present from the very beginning of the School of Madrid, thanks to Ortega, and with him the total irruption of the body, of the singular, of creativity. And what runs through everything and is the very core from

which the human lives and reflects, in Spanish has been called for centuries simply “reality” or sometimes simply “the real”, as a physical character that constitutes us and that does not allow itself to be trapped either by the intentional or the conceptual:

Physical is the original and ancient word to designate something that is not merely conceptual but real. For this reason it is opposed to the merely intentional, that is, to that which consists only in being a term of awareness. (Zubiri, 1980: 22)

And that Real is never subject to logic; it expresses the very physical character of everything that constitutes us and, at the same time, liberates us and allows us to create. And in this a beautiful link is already articulated with that Real, which does not allow itself to be completely trapped by Lacan’s symbolic; a pillar on which the Slovenians exist by giving a philosophical foundation from Kant’s criticism to the German Idealism of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel; that is, through freedom.

In this way Kant, Hegel, Freud, etc., are, for the Slovenians, like a matrix horizon from which to think about the human, but which is now radically considered from an articulation of the Hegelian logical itself, and from the Lacanian Real. This is the great innovation of the Slovenians, to account for the human and even for things themselves (which is the aim of all ontology and its “thirst for totality”). And, on the other hand, the Spaniards have Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, etc., as the structural basis of their thought, in which the body and history operate as an expression of the human; of a human that never allows itself to be trapped in any categorical system, with no logic, nor logic symbolic that can determine it. The material physical freedom of the Slovenians and the Spaniards, outside the universal philosophical rationalist European establishment, is the great strength of their thought. Slovenians and Spaniards, with this weak and material reason, allow us to reflect on the human in our times and thus to be able to open certain shreds of confidence in the near future.

The Lacanian Real is articulated masterfully by Hegel in the “Doctrine of the Concept” in his *Science of Logic* of 1816: “The pure concept is the absolutely infinite, unconditioned and free” (Hegel, 2015: 151); and Zubiri points it out in 1980, in a very precise formula in the first volume of his *Trilogy of Sentient Intelligence, Intelligence and Reality*: “Reality is the formal character – formality – according to which what is apprehended is [...] something ‘*de suyo*’” (Zubiri, 1980: 10). The Real, that freedom that happens to us and that does not allow itself to be trapped in any categorisation, already operates in our own animality; we feel this opening in a radical way in our skin, and it perforates us, and thus we are.

2. Lacan's Moment of the Real in the Human

The great Slovenian philosopher Alenka Zupančič, following her friends Dolar and Žižek (who calls the three of them a *troika*),¹ draws a fundamental conclusion for psychoanalysis since Hegel: its materialism, and if there were a “Zubirian” clinic it would be equally material:

So perhaps this would be a good formulation of materialism: materialism is thinking which advances as thinking of contradictions. And this is what makes psychoanalysis a materialist theory (and practice): it starts by thinking a problem/difficulty/contradiction, not by trying to think the world such as it is independently of the subject. (Zupančič, 2017: 123)

Psychoanalysis is an eminently materialistic theory and praxis (a clinic); and it is so because it is “Hegelian”, that is, methodical (“dialectical” as it is often called). And Hegel explains this very lucidly in the famous final passage of the “Doctrine of the Concept” in the *Science of Logic*: The Absolute Idea. The psychoanalytic clinic is an absolute clinic (the truth of it is the articulation of the theoretical and the practical in and by what Hegel calls the logical). The clinic is constituted as such in the contradiction itself, which as a differential perforates everything, in the Real, in that impossible, it is that impasse, in the gap, etc. (there are multiple ways of describing it), which freely and “monstrously” articulates the human and things. The young Mexican thinker Carlos Gómez Camarena puts it very precisely as follows: “It is possible to do something with the emptiness, the hole, the gap, the impasse, the division, the negativity: that is what the Lacanian and Hegelian lessons would consist of” (Gómez and Aguilar, 2020: 314). And this is how the Slovenian School works this Hegel-Lacan and Lacan-Hegel articulation, but always under the tutelage of the old Kant (who refuses to disappear, and that is a problem).

It is as if Kant, that old “im-potent” mole (as Nietzsche calls him), embodies the Real itself. Kant is that “rock” of thought that never lets itself be completely trapped, there is no register that determines it, that archives it; no apparent law that dominates it completely. Lacan, as a reader of Kant, generates a tremendous influence on the Slovenians, which is also the reason for their distance from Nietzsche (the demolisher of Kant and of precisely that rock-real). In the Lacanian Real always hides the Kantian “X” (via the *Ereignis* of the beloved Heidegger of the “turning”); both, the philosopher and the analyst, are co-determined. And Jacques-Alain Miller, who is a Kantian in disguise, is there and from there hegemonizes his reading of Lacan and with it of philosophy (Miller who is always distant from Hegel and close to Kant

1. “We’re just three friends getting together and that’s all. There you have your Stalinist KGB-style *troika* again – you know, the communists were always organized as a *troika*, to liquidate people or whatever. It is strictly a *troika* with Alenka Zupančič, Mladen Dolar and me.” (Žižek and Daly, 2004: 37)

in his conception, obviously, of an ethics). And that is why Miller's Real has much of that Kant-Lacan that the old Žižek, the most philosophical of Slovenians, tries to take distance, in these times.

This impossible thing, as we know, was conceived in modernity by Kant as the "thing in itself" (*Das Ding an sich*), but in truth, he did not know very well what to do with it; it was a tremendous rock that weighed him down; he lived his "Thing" as his symptom (and it returns again and again in his life; just like those Lacan definitions of the Real, as that which always returns to the same place), that is, as the patency of a hole that follows him like a ghost. Kant saw freedom and was frightened; Kant could not bear what he saw. Kant was "im-potent" (the macabre and accurate Nietzschean joke) to see what that infinity was, that – in Hegelian terms – absolute, unconditional and free; and radically to Ourselves by means of our own body, from our way of feeling things.

The Spanish philosopher Xavier Zubiri calls this Hegelian moment of absoluteness, unconditionality, freedom, and unspecificity that constitutes us in our own animal materiality, reality, the "*de suyo*"; he analyses it in a precise and very fine way in his trilogy on sentient intelligence (1980-1983); and it is a fundamental contribution to understanding the human today (Zubiri, 1980, 1982, 1983). Zubiri introduces the theme of the Real throughout his life, from the hand of Nietzsche and in critical discussion with the Heidegger of the *Sein und Zeit* of 1927. And from there his philosophy opens up like Žižek's to a profound dialogue with the philosophical tradition, and with the new anthropological and cultural studies of today. And in both they do not compromise with being able to determine or define that Real that constitutes us and that always opens us to something to come. The issue is to specify what expresses that Real, and in it Lacan (of the second teaching), like the Heidegger of the *Ereignis* that Zubiri reads, gives certain features of the Real that Žižek will appropriate to rethink the human throughout his extensive work.

And Lacan, through Heidegger (and Heidegger's ontology that permeates his analysis² – and let us never forget how important his analysis of Heidegger's 1950 lecture *Das Ding* is), observed in Kant's thought, in his ontological epistemological knot of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, and its second edition corrected and already classic of 1787) and in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), the very expression of the Real that opens everything without being

2. For example, this is seen in Lacan's critique of Foucault based on Heidegger's ontology in 1967 (the category of the psychosis of rejection is articulated as rejection of being, and that expresses the ontic of Foucault and his negation of the human as humanity):

In fact the being is so excluded from all that, that to enter into this explanation will be able to say by taking up one of my familiar formulas, that of the *Verwerfung*, that it is of this order that it is about; if something is articulated now that can be called the end of a humanism, which does not date from yesterday or the day before yesterday, nor from the moment in which M. Foucault wants to articulate it, nor myself, it is something that has been done for a long time. Thus the dimension is open to us, it allows us to discover how it plays, according to the formula I have given of this *Verwerfung* as the refusal of Being. (Lacan, 2014)

nothing, but that remains in that everything without being nothing (it is a very special “rock” because it founds as if it were itself unfunded). Miller tends to separate too much, epistemologically, the Real from the symbolic, and naturalises the Real in a naive way, but thus renders it operative for its own cause, as if it were something that should return to an “origin” but that was lost and misplaced; and hence the misplacement of the human today. Even the clinic itself is in danger. And through his beloved Kojève, Lacan saw Hegel’s method (in the lessons that the Russian thinker gave from 1933 to 1939, and from a very unusual interpretation of Hegel, from someone who did not know him, from the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* passed on by Freud and Heidegger), but as a negative and closed dialectic of recognition and the recognized; that is, the end of history (never as an open, dynamic structural affirmation of the human), the exit to that monstrous initial freedom of the “origin” that constitutes us in the Kantian way. Because Lacan, following Heidegger to rethink Kant and that “X”, always understood it as “origin”; and that is evident at the end of Lacan’s life, although Žižek wants to save him against Miller.

And the Slovenian School carries within itself this Kant-Lacan, not only Joan Copjec (Copjec, 2006), but also Žižek and all of them. And in this, as I have said, Jacques-Alain Miller is always fundamental; he is like the “translator” of Lacan in simple, sometimes very simple his thinking (but as a good translator he betrays him radically);³ and the Slovenians influenced for Miller-Lacan. It is Miller who is behind Copjec, Zupančič and Žižek, although he wants in these times, as I have pointed out, to distance himself from his master, especially because of the political issue of Miller and his naturalised – and so “ordered and correct” – “tastes” of European social democracy.

It is fundamental to understand that Miller realises (because it is evident) how important the Real is for the clinic in Lacan’s view (even more important than the symbolic, his first great teaching and one that holds true); he can even understand how the “madness” of late-period Lacan tries to find the Real in another way (hence the work of the mathematical and the “Borromean knot”); and that the Real functions as something that does not allow itself to be trapped, but which Miller, in the 21st century, eagerly seeks to account for, almost in the symbolic and in the imaginary (a Real that is almost separated from the symbolic is constructed in the imaginary); it is like returning to the old nature and to magic, when science not only does not serve but is part of human suffering, a science at the service of Capitalism.

In this way the theme of the Real in Lacan becomes complex in itself,

3. In France there is something very interesting and worth noting, it is like an overcoding of one author over another, in a certain parasitic way. For example, how many times are we discussing Hegel with a French person (or someone “trained” in France) and it turns out that it was not Hegel, but Kojève; and the same happens with Marx, it was Althusser; and with Nietzsche, it was Deleuze. And in the case of Lacan, it was Miller. It is interesting that this has always been the case throughout the history of thought: Thomists still think they know Aristotle, and so on.

already because of Kant and his “Thing-in-itself”; and because of Lacan himself and how he is developing, over the years, in his experience and speculation with the Real and in his clinical dealings with the other; and because of Miller himself and his naturalizing and ordered interpretation of the Real above all else, but which is achieved by means of the imaginary (and with great conceptual philosophical problems, but which in the clinic does work to work with a social-democratic and neurotic European analyst); and if we add to the theme of the Real the Slovenians themselves, the “Thing” becomes labyrinthine (since some of them are more Kantian than Hegelian, while all of them have been influenced by Lacan, and others are direct disciples of Miller). In any case, Lacan himself, when he was already very old, said, in *The Sinthome: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XXIII* (1975-1976): “The real is lawless” (Lacan, 2006: 135). And this maxim can sometimes confuse analysts and philosophers; and hence the very complex nuances among Slovenians themselves. And in this debate, Žižek wants to clearly distance himself from them via Hegel and philosophy; and he seeks to be a better interpreter of Lacan than Miller himself (his teacher). Žižek wants to be of the Lacanian left (just as the Hegelian left were the great connoisseurs of Hegel, such as Marx, the greatest of them all); the direct disciples of Lacan, like Miller, cannot come up with Lacan’s own (the same with the direct disciples of Hegel). But we cannot forget that Lacan himself becomes a text to be deciphered; for he himself is incessantly considering the clinic and the analytic itself, in order to give an account with this singular human at the height of the event. And in this, the Real constitutes him completely and does not leave him alone (because since the Seminars of the 1970s he has become more and more radical.) There is no interpretation of Lacan, nor does he have one of himself (nor of any real thinker); and this is Žižek’s mistake; to try again and again to have the last word on Lacan (and likewise on Hegel). It is the totalizing spirit of the “old” metaphysician Slavoj Žižek; although it is an “endearing” spirit of Europe that fades every day.

And for the same reason it is necessary to rethink the Real today. And in this, the thought of Xavier Zubiri is a good update of the absolute, unconditional and free that constitutes us; and thus it is possible to give a correction to the current Lacanism in order to understand the human, beyond, for example, the psychoanalysis of Miller and his school of teaching that is so dominant these days (Paris, Barcelona, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, etc.). With Zubiri we get rid of Kant and Heidegger, and we bring Nietzsche into a more complex and material theory of ourselves, but one that accounts for what we are in the radical difference and material animality that structures us.

3. Miller and the impossibility of thinking and living among WeOthers

Sometimes I think that Lacan himself, the old Lacan, made “symptom” with the Real (like any thinker who lives and thinks from that other that constitutes him and does not allow himself to be tamed); or, as Miller also said, but without his critical tone:

In psychoanalysis there is no knowledge in the real. Knowledge is a lubrication on a real stripped of all supposed knowledge. At least that is what Lacan invented as the real, to the point of wondering if that was not his symptom, if that was not the cornerstone that made him maintain the coherence of his teaching. (Miller, 2012)

And Jacques-Alain Miller's interpretation of these times of the Real, and of psychoanalysis, of the 21st century, of current problems, of the human, is very clear in his *Presentation of the Theme of the IXth Congress of the WAP: The Real in the 21st Century* in Buenos Aires on 26 April 2012 (Miller, 2012). The French analyst was then already quite old (he was 68 in 2012; now, in 2021, he is 77), but resoundingly lays out his interpretation as if he were Lacan himself. He even corrects him: for Miller that Real was nature, but today it is shown as disorder. This is a very Eurocentric analysis, and quite precarious at a historical-philosophical level, but it is valid, and operates, it seems, in the clinical space, although I hope it is not quite so, for the sake of the analysers themselves, in their differentiation as humans. He writes: "Previously the real was called nature. Nature was the name of the real when there was no disorder in the real" (Miller, 2012). Žižek is to become radically opposed to his master; one can hear in full what Žižek says critically of Miller in his masterclass *Surplus-Value, Surplus-Enjoyment, Surplus-Knowledge* at Birkbeck College, University of London on 19th April 2016 (what he says to Miller) (Žižek, 2016b). Miller, like many thinkers, confuses a problem of content with one of form. And in that already from phenomenology (even from Hegel and then from Nietzsche) it is studied in another way and Zubiri is a direct heir to the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger: the Real does not go for a content: nature, magic, myth, order, etc., but is an operator, a mode of happening, of liberation from all content that constitutes us. That was already Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, almost written against Kant and his followers Fichte and Schelling (and that was Nietzsche and his *Zarathustra*, also written against Kant and his admirers like Schopenhauer and Wagner).

To indicate the Real, Miller shows it in a certain historical context, which is quite important and accurate for me; he separates the human in the middle of nature as the past (order, structure, family), and Capitalism (together with science) as the present (disorder, emptiness, human multiplicities). It is like a certain idealised history that goes from order to disorder by means of its contents; and in this present disorder the human is established in the middle of the field of the Real. And this would be the reason why today we are so lost, navigating in the void itself; without any meaning, and the human pulverized, fragmented, crazed, with the clear distinction between neurosis and psychosis lost (and without it even the clinic would be in danger in these times, because it erases its constitutive horizon). And in the face of this, for Miller, it is necessary to defend oneself from the Real (and to resist and repress it); this is what is appropriate to the present analyst, because the analyst experiences this Real with anguish, as symptom, as inhibition. Miller is very emphatic, and points

this out all the time and in synthetic formulae: “There is a great disorder in the real” (Miller, 2012). And this is also seen, on the part of Miller, as a veiled criticism of the late Lacan. The Real is no longer expressed in the symbolic as a mere impasse in it; the symbolic, as the Name of the Father, is as if detached from the Real, and operates as a symptom of the Name of the Father.

And, for the same reason, it is fundamental to see how the Real is acquiring autonomy in Lacan’s own thought, as in the clinic, in order to understand the human today (even against Miller himself and his critique of Lacan); and this is forgotten by Žižek, who is too structural in his analysis and wants to save Lacan at all costs, including, for example, the formulas of sexuation of *Seminar XX*; and also to save his structural logical Hegel. Miller sees as something negative this fall of the Name of the Father that becomes a symptom, and with it of the symbolic itself; and, therefore, Miller sees the loss of a certain vision of the Real as a certain matrix that structures; and if before, everything was going better for the human, for him today, on the contrary, it is getting worse; that symptom of the Name of the Father is what is now constituting, for example, the queer, the trans, a certain feminism, certain humans, etc. The human is breaking the gender, the genders, the formulas of sexuation written from the symbolic at a certain historical height, because the symbolic is heir to Capitalism (like the imaginary) and it is also fractured. Miller is very radical and his naive criticism of Lacan is noticeable:

The Name of the Father according to tradition has been touched, has been devalued by the combination of the two discourses, that of science and that of capitalism (...) The Name of the Father, a key function, Lacan himself has lowered it, depreciated it in the course of his teaching, ending up by making of the Name of the Father nothing more than a *Sinthome*. That is to say, the supplanting of a hole. (Miller, 2012)

It is interesting that what Miller sees as problem, error or disorder, is for me the basis of what happens today in the human, and it is what makes it possible in part for Zupančič and Žižek to consider the human from a structural sexuation, but close to the historical performative of Queer Theory; it is even more than what the Slovenians think, because it is what allows us to become the “monster” that we are day by day, beyond the logics that want to determine us. And in this, Zubiri’s philosophy is a great complement. The problem is to consider the Real in a more integrated way in the human material itself, and that is why the Name of the Father becomes a symptom; and for this, Zubiri gives us very important keys to find the Real today, overcoming Lacan’s dualism that is embedded in psychoanalysis and the philosophies inherited from it, such as the Slovenian one.

The interesting thing is that the Real becomes autonomized for Lacan and Miller (beyond their social-democratic moralism) throughout history in its interplay with the human; and it becomes in that freedom as impossible, in this Hegel is fundamental (and Nietzsche is totally important; and as I have said, this is one of the problems of the Slovenians: the absence of Nietzsche;

which is not the case with the Spanish). And Zupančič, the only one of the Slovenians who has really studied Nietzsche, also follows her teacher Miller-Lacan in this:

According to Lacan, the Real is impossible, and the fact that “it happens (to us)” does not refute its basic “impossibility”: the Real happens to us (we encounter it) as impossible, as the impossible things that turn our symbolic universe upside down and lead to the reconfiguration of the universe. (Zupančič, 1995: 235)

And this problem also persists in Lacan’s theoretical work.

However, the praxis of psychoanalysis – a materialistic praxis, as Zupančič reminds us – always supposes “the possibility of treating the Real by means of the symbolic” (Lacan, 2003: 14). And in this we do not get lost finally with the Real, something similar to Kant and the “X” that is expressed everywhere in his praxis (his postulates); but Hegel, via Fichte, Hölderlin and Schelling, resolves to show, if you will, to a clinic not of the human itself, but of the human itself in its socio-historical fabrics; because here exists the absolute, unconditional, the free (as Hegel of the “Doctrine of the Concept” would say). And Hegel, together with his friends of his own troika, already makes this quite clear in that fragment of the *First Program of the Systems of German Idealism* from the winter semester of 1796/97: “The absolute freedom of all spirits that carry within themselves the intellectual world and that must seek neither God nor immortality outside themselves” (Hegel, 1998: 220). The clinical indication is fundamental, because it inscribes in the symbolic a Real that mobilizes us in some way, even if it is traumatic; but one could also free the Real from a certain “tragic” weight and not associate it only with the traumatic, in order to see it operate, but beyond the traumatic or non-traumatic.

It is interesting to note that Zupančič finally sees the Real as that certain rock (but not so hard). But thanks to Hegel-Žižek, he can free himself, in part, from Kant-Miller and see that the Real is expressed in human formations, in socio-historical fabrics, in that traumatic, that shows itself in the very tension of the life-death of each of the WeOthers throughout history (that is history, let us not forget, the end of history of Hegel’s Phenomenology), the Real as the class struggle, the pain in the face of life, the finitude in the face of the nihilism of the Pandemic, the impotence in the face of the all-powerful factual power, not being able to eat if one does not have a job; it is the Real that somehow almost as a practical postulate, as a trauma that leaves a certain trace that mobilizes us. Here Zupančič is really brilliant:

The crucial point [...] is to distinguish historicity proper from evolutionary historicism. Historicity proper involves a dialectical relationship to some unhistorical kernel that stays the same – not as an underlying Essence but as a rock that trips up every attempt to integrate it into the symbolic order. This rock is the Thing qua ‘the part of the Real that suffers from the signifier’ (Lacan) – the real ‘suffers’ in so far as it is the trauma that cannot be properly

articulated in the signifying chain. In Marxism, such a “real” of the historical process is the “class struggle” that constitutes the common thread of “all history hitherto”: all historical formations are so many (ultimately failed) attempts to “gentrify” this kernel of the Real. (Žižek, 1994: 199)

However, as I have pointed out, the point is to consider the Real operating in the symbolic, in the logical, but as a certain unspecific hollowness that constitutes us. It is necessary to free the Real from the psychoanalytic weight of the traumatic or, simply put, of “negative” things that constitute us; they could be positive, but the issue is another and more radical one: more Nietzschean, more Zubirian.

4. The Real as of its own; Zubiri, the new analyst of the human

Zubiri’s thought may hit upon what Lacan is trying to think at the end of his life, namely that the Real is a certain unspecificity that constitutes us in the psychic material apparatus itself, and that somehow expresses itself in its total and empty otherness in the symbolic. Perhaps the primordial expression of the Real among the dozens that exist is given by Lacan himself in his *Seminar XX: Encore* in 1972-1973: “The real cannot be inscribed except as an impasse in formalization” (Lacan, 1981: 112). And this is what Žižek wants to make note of the last Lacan, and show that there is a certain return to the symbolic, although Lacan himself goes astray, but not as Miller thinks. In Lacan, who is an ontological thinker and, therefore, totalizing, he has a system of thought in which that totalizing is always open (never closed by its very structure). And that is why it is linked, in Žižek, with the structuring Hegel of the *Science of Logic*; for Lacan it is a Science of the Real. Miller points out: “And that has been a heroic attempt to make psychoanalysis a science of the real, as is logic” (Miller, 2012). And in this science that Lacan wants to found, the Slovenians think that they will realize it; and to execute this plan: sex as the material animal dimension of the human is fundamental. That is why Žižek is emphatic in this:

For philosophy, the subject is not inherently sexed, sexuation happens at the contingent and empirical level, while psychoanalysis elevates sexuation to a sort of formal a priori condition of the very emergence of the subject. (Žižek, 2015: 627)

And Zupančič puts it bluntly, psychoanalysis is an ontological mode of being with the human:

My claim is that the Freudian notion of sexuality is above all a concept, a conceptual invention, and not simply a name for certain empirical “activities” that exist out there and that Freud refers to when talking about sexuality. As such, this concept is also genuinely “philosophical”. It links together, in a complex

and most interesting way, language and the drives, it compels us to think a singular ontological form of negativity, to reconsider the simplistic human/animal divide, and so on... (Hamza and Ruda, 2019: 438)

Our sexuality and ontology itself are articulated by psychoanalysis when the Real operates as that impossible that constitutes us in our animality and removes the symbolic itself that pretends to structure us (it is the drive in the Freudian sense). However, it is the obsessive Spanish thinker Zubiri, the only one who has carried out the Science of the Real, who can specify for us what that Real consists of, and, at the same time, how that Real opens us up as differential humans:

There is only society when the phylum is human, that is, when the animal is an animal of realities. In such a case the human animal is poured to others not only for being diverse in their notes, but for being “really” diverse in their “real” notes. And this is society. (Zubiri, 1986: 194)

This Real character that happens to us opens us neither more nor less than to itself in its freedom from other in order to be; it is this Real that frees us from the symbolic itself, to the extent that it constitutes us, but in a radically unspecific way (beyond the traumatic). And it is this Real that constitutes us, but in an open way, that demands from us an articulation with one another in order to be. It is Hegel’s struggle for life or death; that is, love in a material sense, and incarnated in the symbolic body that we are.

If we remove the aura of mystery and pomposity from the Real, if we remove the Kantian veil of the “X” and the Heideggerian *Ereignis*, and if we understand Lacan from theory and from clinical experience, from transference at the height of time, the Real becomes the very perforation of the human in its own animal materiality; that is, its freedom, which is actualized for us today in a more radical way. This is Hegel’s “bone”, and this is what indicates our character of being radically *deinon* in the manner of Sophocles and his *Antigone* – that is, “marvellous and dreadful” at the same time, the monstrous that constitutes us, our immoderation, our openness, our constitutive impasse. And, therefore, analysis is almost consubstantial to this material human, opened in the body, in its own viscera, as in a butchery (as in a painting by Bacon). And this material character of the very unspecific openness of the human for being a Real human is what always escapes Miller and many current thinkers and clinicians; and hence he always tries to determine a monstrous human who does not allow himself to be trapped in epistemological fictions of any kind (Miller does not know what to do in the face of a human who declares himself queer or trans). This perforation of the Real in the psychic material apparatus itself is what frees us from the chains of animality and, at one and the same time, articulates us with one another, whether to love one another or to kill one another; it is what drives us, it is what makes us sexed: it is society in all its radical symbolisation that regulates us. Zubiri is quite

categorical: “Sociality belongs to the whole of man as an animal of realities, it belongs to his form of reality. Man is essentially social” (Zubiri, 1986: 196-197). And Zubiri is in accordance, as I have said, with Hegel and his *Phenomenology*: “[T]he behaviour of the two self-consciousnesses is determined in such a way that they check themselves and each other by means of a life and death struggle” (Hegel, 1966: 116).

What Freud knew, and what Lacan later made explicit in the twentieth century, Zubiri expresses in an exemplary way in his work *Science of the Real*:

Man is a reality and as such reality is constituted by a system of notes... They are notes by virtue of which man is an essential and formally psycho-organic reality [...] So formally psycho-organic that it cannot be split into two: on the one hand the psyche and on the other the organism. It is a unitarily psycho-organic reality [...] the reality of man is intrinsically and formally psycho-organic. (Zubiri, 2006: 7)

This psycho-organic character is what allows us to understand that Real as not symbolizable, but in the symbolization itself, because it is not about “another” world, but simply about this immanent world in which we are and live, as sexed, mortal and historical animals among each other, to be already loving each other and suffering with the other in our total empty, unconditional and free difference that we are corporeally physical.

Zubiri put it this way in 1983, in his last year of life, in *Intelligence and Reason*:

In this apprehension, precisely because it is apprehension, we are in the apprehended. It is, therefore, a ‘being’. Apprehension is for this reason an *ergon* that perhaps I think of calling *noergy*. (Zubiri, 1983: 64)

If we understand the human from this radical *noergic* character that constitutes us, we realize that we are seized by the Real; and only in this way are we what we are and, moreover, we are necessarily with others: this is the radical element of our sexuation. Miller is completely trapped, both in his theory and in his clinic, in an apparatus or device of the symbolic that leaves him trapped in the culture of his own epoch and unable to see the human in its monstrosity, in its difference, much less in its sexuation, finitude and historicity; a human that is only with others because it is open in a radical freedom that perforates everything and pulses it; its very stimulus gives it a more radical trait than being mere instinct, but its drive is the drive of an animal that moves in the Real. The human is the only animal formally sexed and, by the same token, a revolutionary animal; and this is because it is an animal of the Real.

And in this Zubiri follows in the footsteps of Hegel and Nietzsche and also, in a certain way, of Freud, realizing that the human animal is an animal that in its own stimulus is open to a radical dimension of emptiness, mediation through antonomasia, absolute distance; that is, freedom:

Therefore, what can never happen to an animal, to feel lost in things, can happen to man. In meaningfulness, the animal can be lost among many answers. Moreover, this 'lost' can be cultivated to produce experimentally an animal neurosis. But this 'lost' is not lost among things but rather disoriented in the responses; that is, it is not rigorously loss but responsive disorder. Only man can remain without disorder, lost in things themselves, lost therefore not in the disorder of his responses but in the distancing of what is felt. (Zubiri, 1980: 70-71)

It is the basis of how the Real constitutes for us our most intimate structure of the symbolic; and not merely an epochal moment in which disorder loses us. It is because of the Real that we are absolutely, unconditionally and freely distanced, Hegel-like, even from ourselves. And that is why, at times, our own Real monstrosity loses us, distresses us, plunges us into the darkness of Ourselves; that is, the Real in a radical way.

It is the exit from the symbolic to the Real in order to find the human from the symbolic formulas. In this Miller is right in his criticism of Lacan, and in this the Real operates as an outside that does not exist as a framework of non-existence for the sexual relation, for the woman who operates in the symbolic itself, because the Real is nothing substantial (it is a non-substantial rock).

If we understand the Real as that which constitutes us in our own apprehension, in our animality, in our skin, our body, the Real ceases to be something ethereal, mystical or some kind of master signifier, and gives rise to something that allows us to see ourselves in our own character, deflated by being free; and in it and for the same reason, in our freedom to realize a life, which is only realized with the other that we carry inscribed in that same differential perforation that constitutes us and moves us. Zubiri develops this idea very clearly in his thought in the following way:

[W]hat is felt presents itself to me as something that has a kind of inner self: it is hot, it is cold, it is heavy, etc., of its own accord. It is not a matter of the content being proper to a subject that is below or behind what is properly felt, but *de suyo* means that that which is the content of the impression has this formal character of its own. Well, this character of *de suyo* is what I call reality. Each thing is real, precisely and formally, because it is of itself that which it is in impression. To be real means purely and simply to be of itself, to be of itself that which it presents to us in impression. The of itself is, then, what constitutes reality as such. (Zubiri, 2008: 153)

And that "of itself", that Real, which constitutes our life and Ourselves allows us to understand more fully Lacan's second teaching, Žižek's thought at present, and the critique of Miller, with regard to not being afraid of that emptiness that does not allow itself to be completely formalized in the symbolic, because that is what enables us to change our own clinic and to update it at the height of the event.

5. Conclusion: Zubiri and Žižek at blows with Miller

Jacques-Alain Miller does not know how to follow Lacan in his later teaching (he even fears him), and the human vanishes not from the Real but vanishes from Miller himself, from his thought, from his clinic, from his political militancy. He understands in such a naturalised way the Real in its distance from the symbolic that he sees in the very progress of science, as a radical Heideggerian anti-science; and in the global advent of Capitalism he sees the vanishing of everything that happens today, from the cosmos to the human (and also of the psychoanalytic clinic itself). And this is the reason for Miller's childish game of associating the feminine to matter in these times and to its non-existence, and with that her frontal attack on all feminism and, especially, on Butler and Queer Theory:

Progressively, physics has had to give way to the probabilistic uncertainty coming from economics, that is, to a set of notions that threaten the subject supposed to know. Nor has it been possible to return to the equivalence of the real and matter. With subatomic physics, the levels of matter multiply and, let us say, the A of matter, like the A of woman, vanishes. (Miller, 2012)

In this seemingly innocuous example hides a major problem of Miller's thought: that he does not understand the human today; and he does not understand it because his way of understanding the Real and the human intertwined is misplaced in his own theoretical and practical ideology. It is not that he does not know what to do with the Real, he does not know what to do with the human, with its sexuation; and, in short, he does not know what to do with the differential in general, and the feminine today, in particular; nor with the human: trans, queer, etc. But the feminine, to use Hegel's own expression from his *Phenomenology* (quoted in the epigraph above), is like that "bone" that is the being of the spirit; she is its truth, she is the truth of the sexual relation because she is the truth of the masculine; in being "nothing" of the masculine, and in it of the sexual relation, she is a non-all of the masculine itself: she is the very hole in the masculine, she is the Real of it. And this must also be understood in a way in which the Real is actualized for us beyond the feminine as well. And what Zubiri makes us see is that it is possible that the human itself is a differential that empties everything human beyond gender; or, in other words, in the performative construction of gender (Butler), the Real dynamizes it. That perforation is by being radically a "bone," a physical character, something that does not allow itself to be trapped by any logification (symbolization) in the very logification (symbolization) in which one is human next to another, because by being a perforated Real of its own we cannot not be next to another perforated Real; it is the only way of being: either in love, or in the struggle for life or death with the differential other that constitutes us.

That performative nothingness – that Real, rock, bone, *deinon* – is not substantial in the empirical sense (à la Miller, a certain Lacan-Heidegger, a certain

French thought such as Deleuze or Badiou, a certain Butler, and also all the feminism of difference, etc.). But it is interesting to note that Lacan himself, within his theory and patriarchal way of being, points out that woman is what makes possible the very center of everything, of that symbolized (logified) everything, of that castrated everything, of the masculine. (This is one of the oldest themes in psychoanalysis). However, I like to understand the human as a perforated double, where the perforation is called “woman”. (This is what Ariadne is for Dionysus himself).⁴ As Zupančič says, in a Hegelian way (and departs a bit from his beloved Kant-Miller): “To be a woman is to be nothing” (Hamza and Ruda, 2019: 434-453). And woman as perforation, because she is not-all, is like a woman nothing (here is Kant again), but of which she is nothing because she functions as an operator, in the sense of Lacanian formulas:

More precisely, to recognize its form itself, its negativity, as its only positive content. To be a woman is to be nothing. And this is good, this should be the feminist slogan. Obviously, “nothing” is not used as an adjective here, describing a worth, it is used in the strong sense of the noun. (Hamza and Ruda, 2019: 448)

However, the same symbolic formula of the feminine, of the sexual relation, carries within itself the Real inscribed symbolically in the symbolic, and in this I cannot avoid seeing a bias that Butler and other current theories try not to generate; and this is the second perforation of the Real. It is important to say that this Lacan of the end of his life (he died in 1981) give way for to a certain negative psychoanalysis; just as a negative theology is given that is reformulated by the Heidegger of the *Ereignis*; and I see Lacan more in that Heideggerian register than in Badiou’s *Événement*, in contrast to what Zupančič thinks: “This ‘something’ goes by several different names – although we will limit ourselves to two: for Lacan it is ‘the Real’; for Badiou ‘the event’” (Zupančič, 1995: 235).

Zupančič is very clear: she argues in turn against a certain Butler and her performative queer feminism, but at the same time she also argues against Copjec and her Kantian-Lacanian differential feminism that carries her patriarchal “Thing-in-itself”. And she reflects that troika friendship with Dolar and Žižek; and it shows. Hegel and Lacan operate almost as ontological formulas in both thinkers to account for the human, and that leads to error, as I have pointed out, because the human is not expressed in any formula (as Zubiri points out), but in any case it helps because it allows us to see the great achievement of the Slovenians: updating Lacan, for these times where the human becomes unclassifiable. And if it is not so, we would be constantly being considered pathologically perverse, like characters in a bad novel by

4. “Dionysus is always surrounded by women. The wet nurse becomes the beloved, on whose beauty his gaze hangs in intoxicated fascination. Her perfect image is called Ariadne” (Otto, 2017: 193).

Sade, in a certain sense “backyard madmen”. But we are those monsters, and the same category of perversion must be updated and extended to everything human, and that of neurosis be kept for a while in the analysts’ trunk. There was already too much of it emanating from Vienna in the 19th century to the whole world, as well as Königsberg’s I and Marx’s labor force.

Zupančič shows that the human does not move of its own accord in the symbolization of masculine-feminine; but the important thing is that she adds, from that structural operative negativity of Kant-Hegel in Lacan’s own Real knot, that the feminine is nothing, a bone, a void; there is always the old Lacanian language operating and that is one of the problems of the Slovenians, but they still try to update and think those old Lacanian categories which, in turn, always go directly from Freud to indicate the human in its eminently sexual character (although where Freud speaks of drive, Lacan speaks of the Real). And there is a negative mediation, au Hegel, in that primordial Real, Kantian-Heideggerian, which does not allow itself to be caught, but which is always giving of itself a symbolization (like the epochs of Heidegger’s history of being). And so there is the knowledge that “the woman does not exist” (*la femme n’ existe pas*), but she does not exist – she is nothing – because she is the disturbing of the masculine gender itself; and in that the Real operates as a failure within the symbolic itself. And Žižek, finally, because he repeats the theme again and again in his books (because obviously the historical becoming runs through it, and its structuring has to give way to what happens: such as the Trans today), explains it in this way, trying to work within Lacan’s formulas of *Seminar XX: Encore*, but in the current time (already 50 years after those formulas). And he cannot pretend, I suppose, that those formulas will be like that forever, they will have to be adjusted again or thrown away; this Zubiri knows very well. In the main, Žižek stakes his thought on the Real; and in this he is very little Hegelian, although he shows that this Real disturbs the symbolic in its symbolization when he tries to express sexuation, because it becomes impossible (it is traumatic); And this is this is very commonplace today, with everything that happens with the human; and by this I am not only thinking of transsexuals or whoever; but also, as perverse as we all are, since we are monsters, that we structure ourselves throughout history and that we defy and transgress every law. In a certain way, in Žižek is present the Schelling of *Philosophical Inquiries into the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809) and of *The Ages of the World* (manuscripts between 1810-1833), a certain Real that operates as a Non-foundation (*Un-Grund*) and from there articulates the structural systems within the possible and in dynamism; but from the total differential with the Real (Schelling, 2004), it is Schelling – and with it Heidegger and his lessons from Schelling that are fundamental to express the *Ereignis* – who is behind Žižek’s Hegel (Žižek, 2016a). But the Slovenian hides it because Schelling, like Heidegger especially, is touched by certain conservative and politically incorrect overtones for these times: arbitrariness, obscurity and dogmatism, a Hegelian would say.

Zubiri’s thought does Žižek good, because it allows us to rethink that Lacan of the Real from a more current and effective perspective, and with

it, independent of Miller or other contemporary thinkers and analysts, we immerse ourselves in the very subject of the human in these times: a human as a sexed, mortal and historical animal that necessarily realizes its life together with others, beyond ideologies or fashionable epistemological and ontological constructs; or, as Nietzsche would say, “in spite” (*trotzdem*) of it all.

The Real imposes itself on us in life itself as something that dominates us: love, death, our own radical freedom, that other that perforates us and that does not exist in a chain of signification of logicization and symbolization. The Real dominates us and snatches us away and breaks any kind of totality; Zubiri expresses this not everything in the following way:

Reality is “more” than real things, but it is “more” in themselves. And just this is to dominate: to be “more” but in the thing itself; “the” reality as reality is dominant in this thing, in every real thing [...]. Well, this dominion is what must be called power. To dominate is to be “more”, it is to have power. Here, power does not mean to be a cause [...]. The moment of reality dominates over the totality, it has power. This is why it is “more” than the totality. And this “more” is just an aspect of the constitutive respectivity of reality as reality. (Zubiri, 1985: 84)

The Real, if it overcomes the issue of gender (so relevant in the 60s and 70s and now relevant again today), indicates the possibility of understanding the trans as the human itself, which in its physical differentiation is being actualized at the height of time between oneself and Others, between We-Others. The Real allows us to understand the human in its sexuation, in its mortality, in its socio-historical fabric of one with the other, that monstrous thing that we are and that allows us to love each other or to fight with everyone for life or death. It is not that woman does not exist, nor that man does not exist, in fact, it is that the human does not exist as such in a logical chain of symbolization that determines us in uncontaminated we are not that human: we are like a walker in the walk itself; that trans that opens the human from our own constitutive animality and without any sense a priori.

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