



From the perception of things to the hypothesis of God

Is Xavier Zubiri a mystic?

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ABSTRACT

There are two fundamental questions that this paper tries to answer: how Zubiri knows God, and whether we can consider his philosophy to be mysticism. The greatest part of the analysis considers the last ten years of his philosophical activity. The first part of the paper analyzes the mature form of his method, which Zubiri revealed in his *Trilogy*. A brief presentation is made of primordial apprehension, logos and reason. Zubiri's method goes beyond orthodox phenomenology, because he finds a need also to include metaphysics. The second part of the article applies this method in order to know God. It begins with an analysis of the person in the process of construction of its I. Zubiri analyzes this mostly in *Man and God*. We can access God only on the metaphysical level of knowledge. On this path he rejects logic and speculation. On our way to know God we must confront the presumed sketch of God with human personal life. We can discover human life only by following strictly the *sui generis* phenomenological method. The conclusion that Zubiri reaches is that there is a personal absolute God, who influences humans in the construction of the I through the reality of things. On certain conditions, we can call Zubiri's approach to philosophy a mystical one. This is due to the constant action of God creating a certain tension between the person and reality and a need for a personal answer to the divine action.

KEYWORDS

reality; relegation; the power of the real; person; enigma; reason; mysticism

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Xavier Zubiri was the first philosopher who introduced phenomenology to Spain. His original philosophy is strongly influenced by the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and the metaphysics of Martin Heidegger; as he confessed in the introduction to the English edition of his *Naturaleza, Historia, Dios*. He knew both philosophers personally (Pintor-Ramos, 1994: 36–56).

The first step we have to take in examining Zubiri's way of discovering God is to understand his method (Gracia Guillén, 2014: 16). There are three steps we must take in order to gain knowledge and comprehension of God. In truth, we could say that comprehension is the fourth and last step of Zubiri's method, which he barely describes.

How can we know God by starting our investigation from the impression of things? Are there any indications of God in things? These are the questions that we will try to answer in this paper. First we will look schematically at Zubiri's method, as revealed in his trilogy, which gives an indispensable perspective on the interpretation of his entire philosophy: *Sentient intelligence, Intelligence and logos* and *Intelligence and reason* (Conill, 2011: 278). Secondly we will analyze how Zubiri applies this method in order to know God. The point of reference in this case will be Zubiri's *Man and God* and *El problema filosófico de la historia de las religiones*. Thirdly, we will ask whether Zubiri's philosophy can be called mystical.

PRIMORDIAL APPREHENSION

Briefly reviewing Zubiri's method, we can find some key points and gain understanding of its crucial terms. Unlike most of Western philosophy, Zubiri does not believe that a knowledge of reality starts and ends with reason, and therefore we do not have to establish a way to have contact with reality through a problematic chain connecting reason or ideas with sense data. Our first contact with reality is called by Zubiri primordial apprehension (*aprehensión primordial*). If we look at a tree, we apprehend in the impression of it — the notes (*notas*), *i.e.* that the tree is for instance moving and is green and — a moment of otherness (*momento de alteridad*) called by Zubiri *de suyo*, which in English can be translated as in its own right (Zubiri, 2011: 10).¹ The moment of otherness emphasizes that the notes are never abstract, but are a part of reality (Espinoza, 2003: 43). Animals apprehend only notes. Humans additionally apprehend that the thing is real. The reality to which a thing belongs imposes itself on us with a certain force. Zubiri calls this the force of imposition (*fuerza de imposición*) (Zubiri, 2011: 32–33). Zubiri also refers to

¹ All English translations of the philosophical terms of Zubiri are taken from the English editions of his books.

notes and in its own right (*de suyo*) as the content (*contenido*) and the formality of reality (*formalidad de realidad*) (Zubiri, 2011: 37).

The human faculty which apprehends is a union of senses with intelligence. It is sentient intelligence (*inteligencia sentiente*). Senses and intelligence are not two different faculties, because they act together. Sentient intelligence is affected by reality. This act is called by Zubiri intellection (*intelección*) or intellective knowing (*inteligir*). In this act the reality is actual in the sentient intelligence. Therefore we can talk about the actuality (*actualidad*) of the real in the intellection (Zubiri, 2011: 13).

Zubiri does not understand reality as something beyond apprehension, because it is always within it. On the other hand reality is not subjective. A note is different from the human being who apprehends it (Zubiri, 2011: 35) — even if it is apprehended in a purely human way, like a color, for instance. Reality and intellection are as one — neither of them has priority (Espinoza, 2002: 92–93). On this level of apprehension the content of the impression is not elaborated or interpreted. We can talk only about the affecting of our sentient intelligence by the thing (Zubiri, 2011: 59–60).

The reality given in the impression has a particular feature. Zubiri says that it is transcendental. We can talk about the transcendentality only of reality, and not of the content. Transcendentality of reality consists in respectivity (*respectividad*) or a kind of communication (*comunicación*) (Zubiri, 2011: 118). The formality of reality transcends the particular content of a thing and has a transcendental structure. This means that the intellection of a thing is always connected with the intellection of other things, and this is guaranteed by respectivity (Espinoza, 2003: 39–40). This is because everything is something more (*más*) than it is itself (Pintor-Ramos, 1994: 64). There is a certain openness in the thing towards (*hacia*) other realities (Zubiri, 2011: 119–123). Because of the “towards” given in the impression, we cannot stop at the first level of intellection. The primordial apprehension of a tree is very poor, because the apprehended content is in an undeveloped form and it is not yet clear what the tree is (Zubiri, 2011: 266). We barely get in touch with the reality of the tree without naming it (Gracia Guillén, 2014). Zubiri says that reality thrusts (*lanza*) us towards other things in order to enhance the intellection. What we have examined up to now is just the individual moment of a thing. Thanks to the formality of reality given in the impression of the tree, we are thrust to transcend the first mode of content giving in order to enhance it. In this way we relate the content of the tree given in the impression to the set of ideas of other things that we already have. This is the second step that our intellection brings about. It is called *logos*.

LOGOS

Logos is the naming, definition, and classification stage of knowledge. Everything *de suyo* is open respectively to other things, creating with them a field of reality (*campo de realidad*). Logos is a mode of intellection in which we know intellectually the thing in the field of reality (Zubiri, 2008a: 16). It means that we apprehend what the tree is in the reality from the perspective of other things in the field.

At the base of logos is the force of imposition, which compels intellection to move from the tree to the idea of tree in order to establish what the tree is. We choose freely the concept with which we wish to compare the tree, or we create it. It may be the concept of a plant, of a piece of landscape, or of something alive. As a result of logos we apprehend that the tree is a tree or a plant or a part of landscape or a living object (Zubiri, 2008a: 224). Now, the tree given in the primordial apprehension has not only the moment of individual reality given it in primordial apprehension, but also the moment of reality within the field given in logos (Zubiri, 2008a: 20).

REASON

The last level of intellection is called by Zubiri reason (*razón*). Only here is it possible, according to Zubiri, to have what we usually call “knowledge”, e.g., science and history, and to know God — we examine this in the second part of the paper. Logos is still insufficient intellection, because we still do not know what the tree really is. Reason is still based on the impression of the same reality (the tree) which is given in primordial apprehension and in logos, but now it reaches the level of ulterior intellection.² The field of reality is not the totality of real things, because it consists of only the things we have known intellectually so far. The totality of things is the world (*mundo*). The world is respective unity. This respective unity of reality is not a concept. It is the physical moment of reality. The thing is now known intellectually in the world. Reason goes beyond what is given in primordial apprehension and logos (González, 1984: 506), but reason is just a modality of the two former modalities of intellection (Zubiri, 2008b: 13–14).

Reason is a new mode of actualization of the content of the same reality within the sentient intelligence. The thing is now apprehended in the world. Reason is searching (*búsqueda*) for reality in depth (*realidad profunda*). This is thinking (*pensar*) (Zubiri, 2008b: 25). Thinking is initiated by the reality of the two former modalities of intellection, and therefore it is not purely

² Logos is also ulterior intellection.

conceptual. Zubiri is categorically against rationalism (Zubiri, 2008b: 31–32). In the process of thinking we do not search for a new reality, but only for a new content (of the tree). This often involves postulation of a new content such as quarks that are not directly experienced as such in primordial apprehension. Because reality in depth is not determined, it is therefore problematic and forces us to search for it (Zubiri, 2008b: 95–96). Things are resonators of the reality in depth, and in this way they are an indispensable system of reference (*sistema de referncia*) for thinking in searching for reality in depth. The system of reference is known intellectually with the impression of reality. Zubiri says that the reality given in the impression is a measure (*mensura*) of the reality in depth. It suggests what reality in depth might be (Zubiri, 2008b: 219–220).

What is reality in depth? Just to give an example: for light it might be a photon or an electromagnetic wave. For the tree it could be atoms. This kind of intellection goes beyond (*allende*) what is given in the impression, but the point of departure for reason is based on the system of reference given in the impression (Zubiri, 2008b: 22–23). Reason always relies on the logos, where it knows intellectually the system of reference. Reason and logos are always sentient. Zubiri calls reality in depth ground-reality (*realidad-fundamento*) (Zubiri, 2008: 104–105). Reason tries to know what the tree is in depth (Zubiri, 2008b: 42). We can say that the content of ground-reality, which goes beyond the impression, is grounded in the impression of reality.

In the three modalities of intellection we are constantly dealing with the same physical reality: the reality of a tree. These three modalities of intellection change only the content of the tree, which is known intellectually firstly as a set of notes in compact mode, secondly as a tree, and thirdly as a set of atoms. We do not know intellectually the atoms directly, but talking about atoms is grounded in the first two modalities of intellection. Therefore the system of reference sets a measure of the reality in depth (Zubiri, 2008b: 51). Reason thinks because of the insufficiency of the two former modalities of intellection (Zubiri, 2008b: 83).

In order to achieve the ground-reality we have to make a sketch (*esbozo*). There is no other way to reach the ground-reality. The sketch is a construction. The sketch is always based on the system of reference given in logos. Zubiri says that the thing known intellectually by logos thrusts towards the reality in depth. The reality in depth is given indirectly in the system of reference. This means that it is not in front of me and it is beyond that which is known intellectually in logos. Sketching is free, but it must rely on logos, because it is looking for the ground-reality of the thing known intellectually by logos (Zubiri, 2008b: 107). The content of the reality in depth is invented (*se inventa*) or postulated according to the canon of reality (Zubiri, 2008b: 109). In other words, Zubiri says that reason endows some other or new content freely invented to the reality of the two former intellections. Reason endows the reality of the tree with atoms, which are ground-reality. The ground-reality of the

tree may be something else, as it was some centuries ago when people thought that material things were composed of some tiny objects which formed larger ones. This is why Zubiri says that reason is historically, socially and individually dependent (Zubiri, 2008b: 150–151), though he does not subscribe to any sort of relativism or deconstructionist theories, that is, we can make progress.

The content of the sketched or postulated reality in depth is not sensed, *i.e.*, it is not given in the impression, because it is beyond it. Yet we can indirectly get in touch with it. How? Zubiri introduces the notion of experience (*experiencia*). Experience is the testing (*probación*) of the sketched reality in depth in the field-reality. This means that reality in depth is inserted in the field-reality in order to test whether it is possible to insert it there (Zubiri, 2008b: 226).

There are different modes of experience. The mode depends on the thing we are testing: thing, person, life, society, history. In the case of persons we use self-appropriation, compenetration (*conformación, compenetración*). In this mode I am “trying to conduct myself by intimately appropriating what has been sketched” (Zubiri, 2008a [Eng. ed.]: 333). In this way we gain knowledge (*conocimiento*). Knowledge is always limited and never exhaustive (Zubiri, 2008b: 262). Its unachievable limit is adequacy (*adecuación*) to the thing. Therefore Zubiri says that knowledge is always under scrutiny (*tanteo*) and provisional. Knowledge is true when reason finds that reality coincides with the sketch of the ground-reality (Zubiri, 2008b: 258).

COMPREHENSIVE APPREHENSION

The final step is called by Zubiri comprehensive apprehension (*aprehensión comprensiva*). With this last step we complete the entire circle of intellection, which begins with a step that is very poor in content but very rich in reality — primordial apprehension. The intellection apprehends next as logos and reason. Now finally we have comprehension (*comprensión*) of the thing (Zubiri, 2008b: 329). We comprehend better than before what the tree is. It is now full intellection (*comprensión plenaria*). This means in our case to see how the atoms cause the tree to live, grow, die and so on. The final stage of intellectual knowing is necessary due to the incompleteness of the prior stages (Zubiri, 2008b: 336–338). Comprehension is historical because it relies on a person’s total sum of knowledge (Barroso Fernández, 2009: 127), but again this does not imply relativism.

Summing up Zubiri’s method, we can say that it consists in three (or four) modes of intellection of a thing. We are always dealing, in the impression of the thing, with the same physical reality (tree), but we know intellectually the content of the thing in different modes. The first two modes of intellection (primordial

apprehension, logos) give us directly the content of the thing. The last intellection (reason) of the content, which is the ground of the thing, goes beyond the impression. Therefore it must be invented by making a sketch, because we do not know what it is. Because of the insufficiency of the intellection of the content of the first two modes of intellection, we are thrust by reality to make the sketch. The thing is problematic because of the insufficiency of the first two modes of intellection. It is the thing which causes us to search for its ground. The first two modes of intellection are a point of departure for free inventions of the sketch. After choosing one out of many possible grounds, we test it by inserting the sketched ground in the content known intellectually in logos. When we discover that the chosen ground coincides with the thing formerly known intellectually, we can say that we truly know what the thing is in reality. The first two modes of intellection belong to phenomenology. The last one endows the first two intellections with a ground that was not given in the direct impression of reality. The very last mode of intellection (comprehensive apprehension) consists in the intellection of the thing (tree) from the perspective of the ground (atoms). In this way we achieve the full intellection of the thing. This entire circle was impelled by the reality, which demands full intellection of its content.

Only now can we move on to the second part of this paper. God is the ground-reality. This means that He is not given directly in the impression of reality. The indirect intellection of God comes from the intellection of a person. The person is problematic; therefore it requires intellection to create a sketch of its ground. With the sketch begins the metaphysical part of Zubiri's method. Because in the case of a person the ground is something ultimate, we can nominally call it God. God is the presumed ground of the person. The person sets a system of reference, and the sketch of God has to rely on this system of reference. The being of the person suggests what God can be. After making the sketch of God, we test it by making experience of the God who was sketched. The experience consists in conducting oneself intimately, appropriating what has been sketched. This intimate conduct Zubiri calls surrender (*entrega*) to God. Only in surrender can we test whether the sketched God resolves the problem of the person. After discovering what the ground is, we can intend to know who the person is. It is a comprehension of the person from the perspective of God acting in one's reality. Coming down to details, let us start with Zubiri's understanding of the person given in logos.

THE HUMAN BEING

Every person changes because of human acts. The I (*Yo*) is a form of being (*del ser*) of an acting person (Zubiri, 2006: 35). The I is shaped or constructed in confrontation with things, *i.e.*, reality. Reality stimulates the I. Every form

of the I is supported by a precise form of reality. Things support the I in its own construction, not because of their notes, but because they are real (Zubiri, 2006: 38). The I is somehow in opposition to the entire reality, because it is different from it, while at the same time the I depends on it in its own process of construction. This is why Zubiri says that the person is absolute (Spanish *absoluto*, which Zubiri derives from *ab-suelto*, set-free, set apart). The person is relatively absolute reality (*absoluto relativo*) because it depends on things in the process of acquiring a new form, that is, it does not form itself *ex nihilo*. Every human act is a new form of the I (Zubiri, 2012: 7).

Without reality there is no person. We can say that reality is a ground of the person in three distinct manners. 1. As something ultimate (*es algo último en mis acciones*). In this sense reality supports the person as something ultimate. 2. As something possibilitating (*posibilitante*). This means that reality creates possibilities among which the person can choose. 3. As impelling support (*apoyo impelente*). Reality forces the person to choose from amongst the possibilities offered, in order to come into being in a new form. This means that reality grounds the I as ultimateness, possibilitating and impelling (Zubiri, 2012: 89–91). Zubiri says that humans live as sentient reality (Zubiri, 2012: 153).

The combined action of reality as ultimateness, possibilitating and impelling is what Zubiri calls religation (*religación*). Religation gives being to the I (Zubiri, 2006: 40). Zubiri says that religation has the power to give being to the I in a new form; therefore it is the power of the real (*el poder de lo real*). The power of the real *dominates* the I. This power transcends all single things, and embraces the entire reality (Zubiri, 2006: 45–46). Religation is related to all human acting, and this is why we experience the power of the real in our every action. In other words, we experience it in our I. Zubiri even says that humans as persons are experiences of the power of the real (Zubiri, 2006: 52–53). Religation acts only in humans. What Zubiri considers very important is that we cannot identify the power of the real with the things, and therefore the power of the real indicates that there must be a ground for all the things different from them (Zubiri, 2012: 9).

The distinction of the power of the real from things is problematic, because things are not the ground of their power (Zubiri, 2006: 60). This raises the question of how it is possible to create new forms of person with the support of things. How, through religation and the power of the real, do things communicate to us something which the I experiences as ultimateness, possibilitating and impelling? How can reality be ultimateness, possibilitating and impelling in the construction of one's I? This aspect of the person which refers to the power of the real is referred to by Zubiri as the theologic (*teologal*) dimension (Zubiri, 2012: 5). It is theologic and not theological, because it refers to the facts and not to the theory which is theology (González, 1993: 78). This theologic dimension is a very important discovery, because we have direct

access to it and we can examine it. Because this dimension thrusts us towards the ultimateness of reality, we can say that through it we have indirect access to God and can ask about Him (Zubiri, 2012: 5–6).

All of the issues which we have examined so far are facts and not theory. A fact is something which is not interpreted and is given in the impression of reality. Transcendentality, the power of the real, religation, are within the impression of reality. God is not given in the impression and therefore He is not a fact (Zubiri, 2012: 481). What is given is the ultimateness, possibilitating and impelling of reality, and from this angle we can approach the topic of God. What is given in the impression of reality is the direction indicated by these three characteristics of reality (Llenín Iglesias, 1990: 114). Our intellection of the person has been unsatisfactory so far because of the aforementioned unsolved problem of his ground-reality. This problem also embraces the enigmatic presence of the ground-reality in things, which are a vehicle of the power of the real. How can we access the reality in depth? It must be suggested somehow within the reality given in the impression of reality — otherwise it would be a speculation to investigate what it is. Speculating about God is not a path which would lead us to Him, says Zubiri. The reason for rejecting speculation as a sheer act of thinking is that the idea of God would not be given in any way in the impression of reality (Zubiri, 2012: 103).

In talking explicitly about God as the one who accounts for the ultimateness of reality, we leave the area of phenomenology and enter the area of metaphysics. Metaphysics concerns the transcendentality of reality, and not its content (Pintor-Ramos, 1988: 328). Metaphysics is necessary partly because of the insufficiency of the content given in the impression of the person, *i.e.*, because of the enigma of the person. So far we have been moving within the domain of primordial apprehension and logos. Now, in talking about the enigma of the person, we are entering the area of reason.

The way of reason to the ground-reality is equivocal. People always ask about the ground, but give different answers as to what it is. Because access to the ground-reality is enigmatic, every answer given has to be justified (Zubiri, 2012: 10). Because the content of the ground-reality is not given in the impression of reality, we have to make a sketch of what it could possibly be. In the construction of the I we experience that reality is ultimate, possibilitating and impelling, therefore we have to include these characteristics in the sketch of the ground-reality. Without a sketch we would not know what we are looking for (Zubiri, 2012: 121). The idea of God that Zubiri sketches is one of the possible ideas of the ground-reality. The ground-reality must be ground for one's relatively absolute reality and for all things. The ground-reality must therefore be absolutely absolute reality (*realidad absolutamente absoluta*). This reality should be absolute not because of its existence in reality. It must be absolute in itself as the ground for reality (Zubiri, 2012: 149). This, says Zubiri, is what

we can nominally call God (Zubiri, 2006: 62–63). We call it nominally God, because it must still be tested whether it is in conformity with one's personal reality, as is required by Zubiri's method. Even though Zubiri proposes this sketch, he says that there are plenty of other possible sketches. The point is that every sketch must be tested. This is why Zubiri can enhance his sketch with some ideas of the Christian God. Some of the characteristics of Zubiri's God are merely deduced from his absolutely absolute reality (Sáez Cruz, 1995: 218). It is necessary that God be personal. If reality gives us a new form of being of the person, the ground-reality has to be personal also (Zubiri, 2007: 412). In making the sketch one always depends on the individual and historical background of ideas that one has. There is no ideologically neutral sketch.

Testing the sketch is what Zubiri calls experience.³ In the case of the person we have to make the sketched ground-reality a personal ground-reality, and test whether it is in conformity with who one is. Being in conformity means being somehow coherent with the system of reference that we received in the impression of the reality of a person. The coherence of the inserted idea of the ground-reality in one's personal life with the system of reference is a means by which one can accept the sketch. This is the physical testing of the sketch. There is no ultimately perfect sketch, because one can always make a better one, which better accounts for what is given in the impression of a person's reality (Zubiri, 2012: 100–101).

In order to realize how testing works, we compare different sketches of the ground-reality. One sketch is atheism, where we say that the ground-reality is reality itself. But in this sketch we ignore the enigma of the things which transmit the power of the real. We do not answer the question of what is the ground-reality of this power. In indifferentism, we make a sketch in which we ignore the entire enigma of the person. In agnosticism we make a sketch in which we center on searching, making out of it the ultimateness of reality. Zubiri's conclusion is that the three sketches do not coincide with what is given in the impression of the person (Zubiri, 2012: 126–129, 294–296).

The right experience in which we can test whether the ground-reality coincides with what is given in the system of a person's reference Zubiri calls faith (*fe*), which is not a religious attitude. Faith is a personal attitude, in which we presume that God as an absolutely absolute reality is reality in depth. If the personal God is ultimate, possibilitating and impelling reality, *i.e.*, absolutely absolute reality, we can afford surrender (*entrega*) to Him. Surrender and faith are the best ways of testing God. Surrender consists in veneration (*acatamiento*), because God is the ultimate reality, and man must acknowledge his own relativity. This leads us also to supplicate (*suplica*) God, because the

³ In Zubiri's books "experience" had two meanings. One means testing the sketch. The second means simply to have an experience of something.

ground-reality “makes possible” (*posibilitante*) the right situations for a man or woman. The last attitude of surrender to the ground-reality is taking God as a refuge (*refugio*) of one’s existence (Zubiri, 2012: 217–218). If there is no surrender, there is no testing of the personality of the ground-reality. In this case God is taken for a reality-object (Zubiri, 2012: 247–248). This means that testing excludes one’s personal need to be treated by reality as a person — says Jesús Sáez Cruz.⁴ Testing of the ground-reality as an object exists in science, where the reality in depth we seek is not a person because it does not account for personal life (Zubiri, 2012: 265–266). By testing the sketch in this way, we can discover whether it coincides with the system of reference from which we set out (the construction of the person). If human life becomes richer and more truthful, it means that the sketch was tested positively (Pintor-Ramos, 1988: 331). According to Zubiri, the Christian God coincides with the system of reference from which we set out.

GOD

This metaphysical and not religious idea of God is the ground of one’s personal life. God is not a classical metaphysical cause, says Zubiri. He prefers to talk about the functionality of God instead of his causality. Classical causality is included as a type of functionality. God’s functionality consists in being the ground of reality. God is its formal constituent. God offers possibilities to humans through things, and therefore we are from God. God also impels a person to exist by choosing the possibilities offered by reality. This means that He is the support of the I (Zubiri, 2012: 170–172). God, being a formal constituent of things, gives himself to reality. This giving by God creates a theologic tension between the I and reality (Zubiri, 2012: 194–195). Because of the intimacy between a person and reality, we have to accept that God is also a person. Only a personal God allows self-appropriation (compenetration) of oneself with the ground-reality (González, 1993: 80). This compenetration consists in communication of the presence of two persons, *i.e.* God and oneself. Practically, the person inserts themselves in the presence of God, who is the ground of everything (Sáez Cruz, 1995: 220–221). God is accessible only through things as their formal constituent. Even in high mystical states there is no other way to access God but in things (Zubiri, 2012: 203). This means that it is impossible for us to separate God from reality (Zubiri, 2006: 69–70).

God as absolutely absolute reality is in Himself and for Himself. He is absolute from Himself (Zubiri, 2012: 183). God’s activity consists in giving Himself

⁴ In personal conversation, Sáez Cruz used the following example. My wife does not give me ultimate support for my personal life because she does not resolve the problem of death. She is only relatively absolute reality. Only personal absolutely absolute reality can give me this support.

to Himself. This is God's life. It is auto-possession, which is fruition. "Fruition is repose in the plenitude of one's own reality" (Zubiri, 2009: 128).

God is separated from things, but at the same time He is a formal constituent of a thing. Nothing is God, but in God everything is real. Things are God *ad extra*. God is not transcendent to things, but He is transcendent in things (Zubiri, 2012: 10–11). The power of the real is a vehicle for the power of God. Therefore, things are the seat (*sede*) of the power of God. Neither things nor the power of the real are God. For God to be the ground-reality of things is not one of His constituent characteristics. Therefore He is independent of things. We have access to God because He is the ground of things (Zubiri, 2012: 190). There is no identity between God and the world. Zubiri explicitly rejects pantheism, and he is also interpreted in this way by some commentators (Sáez Cruz, 1995: 184; Llenín Iglesias, 1990: 30; Pintor-Ramos, 1987: 118). Zubiri explicitly admits that there is a reality which is outside of our senses.⁵

Zubiri admits that there is an analogy between God and a person, but it differs from that found in Aquinas' theory of analogy. The basis of the analogy is the absoluteness of God and of the person. God is absolutely absolute reality, whereas a person is a relatively absolute reality. In any case we should avoid any kind of anthropomorphism in our thinking about God. God is not living, intelligent, willing in superhuman form. God's reality is inaccessible to us. Our thinking about God should always begin with His absolutely absolute reality. In saying that He is alive, we say that His activity consists in full auto-possession. In saying that He is a person, we mean that He is reality absolutely in its own right (*suya*). It means that He does not depend on anything (Llenín Iglesias, 1990: 28–29).

In saying that God is intelligent and willing, we mean that He is absolutely present to Himself and absolutely self-sufficient. When talking about God we always take as a starting point His absolutely absolute reality, and not our relatively absolute reality (Zubiri, 2012: 188–190). Even though the functionality of God in the person is interpersonal, it is not possible to say that God's You is some other I. The concept of You in the case of God is only analogous to the human I (Zubiri, 2006: 71). We know intellectually God only in His grounding activity and not what He is in Himself (Llenín Iglesias, 1990: 30–31).

MYSTICISM

The final step that Zubiri takes in his method is called comprehensive apprehension, where we comprehend the entire reality and the person enriched by the knowledge we have gained so far. God as the ground of the person is not

⁵ "To be sure, there is an infinite number of things beyond what is sensed: but we are brought to admit them, we are brought to them, by a sentient intellection of what is apprehended in its own right" (Zubiri, 2009: 37–38).

something external to the I. God is in oneself. One has an intimate relation with Him as the ground of one's entire being. One is real through being in God. On the other hand, one is not God but oneself. His presence is dynamic and creates tension, which constitutes the I. One constructs oneself because God impels one to do so through things (Zubiri, 2012: 177–180). This action of God is more unveiled than mysterious, but one can ignore it. We ignore it because it is difficult to accept that one is relatively absolute, that one depends on reality and God as its ground. It is easier to consider God as an object and to exclude Him from the construction of one's I (Zubiri, 2012: 181). But in truth, humans are the experience of God (Zubiri, 2012: 524). In saying this we gain a new content of human reality, and we fully know intellectually what we are.

In order to describe the modality of interaction between God and a person, Zubiri introduces the notion of personal causality (*causalidad personal*). He explains it in this way: a relationship between friends is not purely psychophysical. Friendship influences what one is and has a metaphysical impact on one. Exactly this kind of impact is made by religion, which is personal causality. God's acting consists in giving, and the human response is surrender. This personal causality exists because of "who I am" and because of "who God is" (Zubiri, 2012: 220–221). Every act of prayer is an act of turning towards God, who is a part of oneself and has a metaphysical impact on one's I. And not only that. God's help, listening to one, consolation, are much more than psychological influences. They are personal causality, and therefore construct new forms of one's I. This is a metaphysical grounding, to which humans respond with surrender.

It should be underlined that the power of the real is experienced by everybody independently of time, knowledge and conscience. The power of the real has been experienced, and therefore discovered, by people throughout the history of mankind. Because the power of the real (religion) is always experienced individually, socially and historically, it is therefore in conform with a concrete person, society and moment of history, and becomes religion (Zubiri, 2012: 13). Complete surrender to the power of the real is possible only in a concrete form, which is a religion (Zubiri, 2006: 83). Concrete proposals for religions are sketches of the reality in depth, and religious followers test them in religious surrender. The divinities we meet in particular religions are representatives of the characteristics of the power of the real. Religion tests a concrete historic vision of God, the world and people. For this reason we can say that some religions are objectively more or less true, because every religion allows us to test its comprehension of God, the world and people through surrender, if it coincides with the system of reference in which reality is as an ultimate, "making possible" and impelling person.

Zubiri rejects Aquinas' classical ways to God because they are purely conceptual, and take as a starting point not an impression of reality, but a theoretical

point of view. Through speculation, God is inaccessible.⁶ The only access to God is through the mystery of the reality of the person, who needs reality in order to change (Zubiri, 2012: 151). Zubiri's way to God is an argument from personal life (Zubiri, 2012: 168). As the sketched concept of God must be confirmed in human life, experience is an indispensable moment of Zubiri's method. Zubiri understands his own concept of God as reasonable (*razonable*), which is more than rational (*razional*). It is reasonable because it coincides with the possibilities of one's life and of one's reality (Zubiri, 2012: 434–435). This solution to the human enigma given by Zubiri is more reasonable than others, but it is always provisional, because it is always possible to find another sketch which better coincides with whom we are as reality (Pintor-Ramos, 1987: 113).

Is Zubiri a mystic? It is hard to give a straightforward answer, because the term "mysticism" is vague. Following Henryk Paprocki's concept of mystics we have to look for three key features of the mystical experience of God (Paprocki, 2003: 86–87). First of all, it must be radically passive, *i.e.*, independent of the human efforts and reaching the most intimate elements of a person. This kind of passivity we find in the process of the construction of the I. God dominates the process of the construction of the I through the things, the power of the real and religation, which are indispensable in this process. Zubiri says that man is the experience of the power of the real. "I build my own I. But God is the one who 'makes me make' my I, my being" (Zubiri, 2009: 122).

The second feature of mystical experience according to Paprocki is direct contact with God. In the case of the Zubirian philosophy we do not have direct contact with God. Even when he refers to the mystical experience of Christian mystics, he interprets this experience in the way that they never access God without the things or outside of them. "Real things are the personal presence of God" (Zubiri, 2009: 140; Zubiri, 2006: 59). Zubiri claims that God's reality does not present itself to us immediately, but at most in "towards" (Zubiri, 2012: 237). This is the directional experience of God (Zubiri, 2011: 108). It means we know intellectually immediately only those things whose formal constituent is God. The things are resonators of God. They resonate what we do not apprehend. God is being experienced in the things through the power of the real and religation. An expression of this directional experience of God is religion. Religion is grounded in the experience of the power of the real (religation).

Paprocki also states that there must be a special moment in the contact with God which gives quite a new, extraordinary experience of God, when the person knows that is reaching Him. This feature is absent in Zubirian philosophy

⁶ Diego Gracia said in conversation that human intelligence is not able to go beyond reality in a speculative way. From a philosophical point of view we are not able to have direct access to anything beyond reality. Therefore Zubiri rejects logic as a means to talk about God.

because our experience of God's presence in the religation is rather enigmatic. This kind of experience of God is more similar to the dark night of the soul described by John of the Cross, when the person is experiencing God as hidden. Only in the case of surrender to God, according to Zubiri, do we reach level of personal causality, which might be something similar to union with God, and is a sign of the fullness of the contact with Him.

Finally, the last feature of the mystical experience is the resulting transformation of the mystic's life. By talking about the surrender to God as an answer to relegation, Zubiri means that it is a kind of metaphysically understood conversion (Zubiri, 2012: 518). This conversion consists in veneration of God, prayer and trust, which allows one to achieve the level of the aforementioned personal causality.

Summing up, we can conclude that Zubiri's philosophy has some features which entitle us to call it everyday life mysticism. Because the mysterious power of the real is constant, it creates constant tension between a person and reality and God as its formal constituent, to whom we may answer with surrender. Unlike in the case of classical mystical experience, there are no violent moments of contact with God and there is no direct access to Him. The surrender allows us to deepen the experience of God as the ground-reality of one's I and of the entire reality.

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