
practice and move beyond that. Simultaneously, he is critical of the reductionist and abstract operations of capitalism, transforming man as a series of chemical bodily processes into a mechanical being.

Finally, Agon Hamza questions the traditional Marxist perspective as well as Marx's view of Hegel as someone who rationalised the actual state of affairs, namely the European type of modern capitalist development involving an authoritarian-nationalist Prussian regime in response to the market pressures and crises of that time, which was in fact a similar situation to that faced nowadays, and arguing that Hegel's concern with the present and the past was to avoid speculative abstraction turning into its opposite (that is, capitalism into fascism and communism into Stalinism).

Interested readers should not be misled by the above attempt to reconstruct the key messages since they might be misunderstood and/or are not always easy to follow. From a social science perspective, departing from the big modernist approaches is not new, yet it is also true that, under the guise of the interdisciplinary approach, openness and synthetic thinking, social science research is today ever less aware of some of the fundamental assumptions and ever more subjected to particular social expectations, with both serving to reproduce the existing order. In this sense, philosophers who take a vertical perspective by linking the most abstract with the most concrete are

the most welcome critics of such work.

Apart from a certain degree of eclecticism, ambiguity and encrypted messages, mixed with wild creativity, something interested readers have by now become used to in the writings of Žižek and his colleagues, it should be noted that parts of the work are difficult to read for those without an education in philosophy (such as the author of this review).

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Vincent Miller
**Crisis of Presence in
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What is possibly more evident than presence? Or less questionable? Although people are not always fully aware of their own or anybody else's presence, any doubts as to whether they are actually present or not, which might appear in the course of their everyday life, are immediately and nonchalantly dismissed by strong self-evidence of being always radically present within oneself at any given moment and frequently enough present to others. The presence of other people and material objects surrounding an individual is

in some sense even a stronger fact for that individual. Others' existence, and thus evidence of their presence, is revealed beyond any reasonable scepticism to somebody through their bodily senses. One only needs his or her sight, smell, hear, touch or taste to realise others' flashy bodies and their presence are real. Our presence is manifested to both each other and ourselves through bodies whereby the existence of a body indicates our actual presence to ourselves and to others as well.

Yet, the human condition of being present can only be in a transparent self-explanatory state when experienced directly, whereas when it becomes the subject of thought and human curiosity things soon become fairly complicated. The state of presence can be the subject of many playful and meaningful processes in society, politics and culture. Miller's book on human presence in contemporary culture points out one, but very interesting and highly relevant aspect of human presence; namely, the ways its condition is seriously limited and put aside, if not even endangered, by the development of modern communicational technology. It is the nature of communication that has significantly changed in the last few decades upon the introduction of personal computers, the Internet and mobile phones. While geographical distances among people are now 'shorter' and thus in some dimensions of human life almost insignificant (e-mail communication, for instance, can be fast with instant effects), the social distances

between people, in contrast, have greatly increased. Paradoxically, while living in a world of intense and dense connectivity, our lives have become lonelier. While people once mainly associated with others from their neighbourhood and the office via face-to-face conversations, today large proportions of them get in touch with each other through different social networks like Facebook, Twitter and similar technology by mobile phone. These alterations to our modern community triggered by the use of digital communication technology are so profound and extensive that Miller compares them to the changes in social structure and human behaviour created by the shift from rural to urban life in 19th century Europe. "Once again", says Miller, "we are asked to live on top of each other, but in a new way: a way in which crowds us not physically, but in terms of the sense of freedom we feel we can enjoy while being watched all the time" (p. 105).

The central dilemma in a sociological point of view concerns how our society should deal with this second social transformation: do we want to change our recently developed digital society back to a moral community again? What was impossible in the not so distant 'good old times' can now become a game of cruel reality. A tiny moment of inattention or inconsiderate frankness on social networks can literally ruin someone's life or reduce their chances of recuperating social capital as a member of some other community. The

case of Justine Sacco, whose insensitive tweet about AIDS stereotypes grabbed public attention all over the world within just 11 hours or the example of digital images of Rehtaeh Parsons, who had committed suicide after first being sexually assaulted and following a year of online bullying, reappeared on the Internet as an advertisement for the lonechat.com dating website can occur because new digital communication technology impacts people's (digital) identity globally, not only locally. On top of that, digital technology enables the personal information to be effectively informatisation, commodification, depersonalisation, decontextualisation and dematerialisation. This change came so quickly that life without modern communication technology almost literally vanished overnight. We need to use the new technology in private life to communicate with family members, we require it in the office to work with colleagues and clients, we need it for exchanging thoughts with friends and acquaintances, and so on. Digital communication technology is becoming the ultimate omnipresent media for communication in the modern world.

Miller states the reasons for the mess we are currently in partly stem from the common and still popular understanding of the body-mind relationship. The alleged separation of mind and body which is, of course, a completely wrong and obsolete view of the relationship, is responsible for the modern platonic understanding

of self. The body is still considered an obstacle in realisation of oneself, so in the best case the body should be re-formed or in the worst case 'annihilated' because it is or in the near future will become obsolete. However, any separation from the human body can only occur analytically or cognitively – there needs to be a mechanism to make such an operation at all possible. Digital technology fits this purpose 'like a glove'. The initial enthusiasm over the Internet, for instance, builds on its disembodiment and can thus function as a desirable model of social, political and cultural utopia. Due to the supposed lack of presence of the body, the Internet is much more subject-centred and transcendental compared to one's encounter with the material and bodily world, while the data shared by it is considered permanent and ubiquitous.

I must admit that I find Miller's attempt to resuscitate the importance of presence for the further 'development' of modern society very appealing. It is not only that the situation currently cries out for a new moral order, a situation too often abused by different extremist groups, but the way Miller speaks about the body in relation to presence implies the vital position of the body in the process of any social change. "The main problem here" says the author, "is a lack of awareness of our own and others presence in the world through these technologies and thus the inability to make proper judgements about the consequences of our actions in

online context” (p. 6). And I like the form of this publication. Miller’s treatise is published in the SAGE “Swifts” collection, one that was already published some 40 years ago, but SAGE has now decided to revive it. Just like a swift, which has gone away for the long, cold winter, bringing

the promise of the return of hot and sunny days. Whether Miller’s book on the issues relating to presence in modern society is an intelligent and profound ‘swift’ that heralds ‘spring’ for our own moral system has yet to be determined but, for a start, it certainly brings us some warm hope.