

Article

Philosophical Interpretation of “God Is Dead”: Retreat, Disruption, and Judgment

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Abstract: Nietzsche’s declaration of “God is dead” signifies not only the collapse of classical metaphysical systems in philosophy but also shifts in the psychological structure of individuals and society after the secularization of Christianity. A philosophical reading is crucial to understanding its whole process and real-world ramifications. We first delineate the fundamental meanings and historical context of the term “God” or “Absolute” and expound upon the mechanisms of spiritual functioning under it, highlighting the significance of God, or the Absolute, as the highest object of spiritual operation. Next, we analyze the death of God, i.e., the retreat of the Absolute, in the realms of reason and faith, exploring its causes and repercussions, particularly the disruption of the operation of the spirit. Then, building upon this analysis, we conclude that the metaphysical life supported by Kant and Hegel faces failure in the present age, because the Absolute has ceased to be the foundation. The roots of spiritual operation are no longer secure; the return to the Absolute points to emptiness, and exit without return creates disruptive division between subject and substance, essence and phenomenon, reason and reality. Meanwhile, the departure of God and the development of capitalism are intertwined, calling for a resurgence in the form of secularization, heralding a renewed human judgment of God.

Keywords: absolute; death of God; spiritual operation; Kant; Hegel; human judgment of God



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1. Introduction

“If God is dead, then everything is permitted”. The self-evidence of God’s existence is called into question, implying that people are no longer inclined to live a devout and holy life, and the moral standards that people commonly follow lose their binding force. For Dostoevsky, this signifies a witness to a real catastrophe: the decline of 19th-century Orthodox culture plunges Russian society into confusion and chaos, materializing in the tragedies and suffering of the masses. As the ultimate result of this disaster, Lacan’s reinterpretation of Dostoevsky, “If God is dead, then nothing is permitted”, highlights a more fundamental and profound issue confronting the development of atheism. In fact, the dethronement of God’s authority in the moral realm leads to the loss of human moral capacity, as morality is not self-generated but bestowed. At the same time, the foundation of human existence itself becomes unstable; the dissolution of moral principles causes people to lose what makes them human.

The question of God’s existence is as ancient as the disciplines of philosophy and religion themselves, with theoretical debates about God having persisted for centuries. Simultaneously, society has continually evolved, leading to concurrent theoretical developments, some of which are irreversible, much like how we cannot revert to certain original topics. For instance, the disputes between Tertullian and Arius regarding the Trinity, or Nestorius’s focus on whether Christ possessed both divine and human natures or solely a divine nature, are no longer the central issues. Today, the mainstream discussion has shifted from the nature of God to the question of whether God still exists. As Tomas J. J. Altizer stated, “There was a God, and there now is not. We must recognize that the death

of God is an historical event: God has died in our time, in our history, in our existence” (Gutierrez 2014).

The issue lies in the fact that the foundation of human existence is God, both theologically and philosophically. So, we are confronted with the same concerns as Dostoyevsky: What happens to man if God is dead? Can there really exist a ‘Godless’ man?

2. God and His Traces: As a Spiritual Existence

God is the supreme being in theology and the highest object of inquiry in philosophy. In their nature, the “Absolute” in philosophy differs from the Christian “God”, yet they overlap in a way that has led to the interchangeable use of these terms. Heidegger aptly expressed this relationship by suggesting that Western philosophy has been telling one such story that: “the ontotheological story which interprets real being as constant presence, and then posits a being who is the highest and most real, i.e., God, who somehow imparts being to the remainder of what-is” (Sikka 2017). This highlights both the connection and the distinction between the two. The differences in their nature reflect the divergent natures of the disciplines of religion and philosophy. Much has been written on this topic, so it will not be elaborated upon here. The overlap lies in the fact that philosophy and religion cover the same area as each other: “In both philosophy and religion mankind aims to make its own the universal cosmic reason: religion does this by worship; philosophy by rational refection” (Kenny 2006, p. 330).

In fact, the retreat of the Absolute, Nietzsche’s declaration of “God is dead”, and the secularization of Christianity occur simultaneously. They reflect the same state of affairs, which Heidegger described as the “essential ruin (Wesenszefall) of supersensory its putrefaction (Vermwesung)”. He stated, “Metaphysics, which for Nietzsche is Western philosophy understood as Platonism, is at an end.....absence of a supersensory, binding world. The whole metaphysical edifice of tradition, on which men rested in the spiritual realm, collapsed, and men’s thoughts and actions were deprived of any effective binding force” (Heidegger 2002, p. 162).

Among other things, the relationship between human and God permeates scholastic theology and shapes the entire tradition of metaphysics. In Christianity, humans are created by God, as described in Genesis: God made man in his own image, using the dust of the ground, and breathed the breath of life into man’s nostrils. Augustine asserted that humans have the capacity to intuit the idea of God and, correspondingly, the ability to intuit the immutable, universal principles of truth, goodness, and beauty. These ideas and principles are not constructed by the human mind but are projected into the human mind by God, like “light”. In *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas used the trinitarian structure of the human spirit to understand and confirm the trinitarian image of God.

In philosophy, humans open the door to God through rational reflection. For Hegel, the religious meaning of “God” is an impure form of the “Absolute” in the human logic dimension: “The spirit of revealed religion has not yet overcome its consciousness as such, or, what amounts to the same thing, its actual self-consciousness is not the object of its consciousness. Spirit itself and the moments differentiated in it generally belong to representational thinking and the form of objectivity. The content of the representational thinking is absolute spirit, and the sole remaining issue is that of sublating this mere form” (Hegel 2018, p. 454). By interpreting religion as a specific stage in the development of the absolute spirit, Hegel achieved the unity of reason and faith within the metaphysical system. This integration underscores that, while religion conveys the absolute spirit in an imperfect, representational form, philosophy seeks to transcend this form through rational reflection, reaching a higher understanding of the Absolute.

Indeed, reason and faith are the very values that underlie Western civilization, together constituting the entire traditional metaphysical framework upon which people rely for spiritual sustenance. This traditional metaphysics intertwines rational and religious elements, providing a comprehensive basis for human existence in the spiritual realm. Relatedly, it is proposed that the Absolute forms the negative foundation of the spirit’s op-

eration, with the mode of operation involving an exit from the Absolute, crossing over negativity, and returning to itself. “In the history of philosophy, it receives various names: *ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ* (idea of the good) in Plato, *θεωρί* (theory), *νοήσεως νόησις* (cognition of the mind) in Aristotle, *One* in Plotinus, *Indifference* in Schelling, *Absolute Idea* in Hegel, *Ereignis* in Heidegger” (Agamben 2006, p. 92). God is the origin and the a priori condition of the operation of the spirit. Plotinus stated, “If there is anything after the First, it must necessarily come from the First... The One is the first body to be ‘beyond being’... That is the productive power of all things, and its product is already all things” (Plotinus 1989, p. 5-4-2). The One is the unmoved mover in the void of non-existence, a state of complete actualization, while intellect is “daring to apostatize from the One”. Thomas Aquinas, building on the principle of “participation”, explained the “one” and the “many” through the metaphysical concepts of potentiality and actuality. He used these to illustrate how finite, contingent beings participate in the existence of self-subsisting being, thereby establishing a stable metaphysical relationship between the Creator and the created. Philosophically, this provides a path of return from the “many” to the “one”. This return to the source is universal in the spiritual process; the Absolute is not only the origin and a priori condition of spiritual operation but also its ultimate and sole destination. In Schelling’s system of indifferent identity, all relationships between beings are the relation with God, i.e., everything exists within God. However, within God lies another origin different from himself. God’s freedom and action are fully manifested in his union and separation from this origin. Schelling said: “Nothing can exist outside of God, even if God exists at this stage only in embryo, for he is the essential core of all beings (das Wesen aller Wesen). The principle that is posited outside of the existent would have to remain nonetheless inside of God. While standing outside of the existent, it has to stand simultaneously inside of God. This means nothing other than that God has to double himself within himself. There has to be a second personality... This is thinkable only if, within the relation of opposition between them, each of the sundered two produced unity for themselves. The unity would appear if the two could become one through an inner harmony generated by each of them separately. In this way they would achieve unity in and through division” (Schelling 2019, pp. 115, 124). Hegel, who is going deeper, argued that negativity is the very structure of the Absolute itself, or that negativity is the One, which is itself beyond self-consciousness. For Hegel, “Everything that from eternity has happened in heaven and earth, the life of God and all the deeds of time simply are the struggles for Mind to know itself, to make itself objective to itself, to find itself, be for itself, and finally unite itself to itself; it is alienated and divided, but only so as to be able thus to find itself and return to itself” (Hegel 1995, p. 23). This dynamic illustrates the spirit’s journey of self-division and self-reconciliation, emphasizing the inherent process of exit and return within the Absolute.

Considering the characteristics of the spirit, the operational rule of spiritual phenomena lies in taking the Absolute as precondition and inner provision. Through the self-negation of the Absolute, the spirit abandons its abode in the void, opens itself beyond the void, and after reflecting upon the entities filled with logical significance (nature, world history as self-alienated spirit), it reaches its endpoint, as absolute wisdom, returning to the Absolute. In this manner, the spirit ultimately “comes home”, seemingly freeing itself from the disruption that has always existed and perpetually threatened it. Only in the Absolute can the spirit, which experienced the negative always already reigning in its habitual dwelling place, now truly reach its own beginning in the identity. Throughout the process of spiritual operation, the existence of the Absolute is foundational.

Thus, the spirit’s journey can be seen as a dynamic interplay of exit and return, negation and reconciliation. The spirit, by engaging with the Absolute, undergoes a transformative process wherein it transcends its initial state of division and alienation, ultimately finding identity and self-realization within the Absolute. This cyclical movement underscores the essential role of the Absolute in grounding and guiding the spirit’s evolution, ensuring that the spirit, despite its wanderings and self-estrangement, inevitably returns to its true source.

3. God Is Dead: Disruption between the Exit and Return of the Spirit

In the operation of spirit, negation leaves behind the uncertainty of various parts of understanding, constituting the ruptured synthesis between the subject and object, form and content, logic and experience, knowledge and belief. The root of negation is a kind of disorientation, which creates the relationship between the spirit and the “absolute” in metaphysics. The return to the absolute gives way to identity, as what Hegel indicated by “expresses the absolute as spirit” (Hegel 2018, p. 16). However, the occurrence of this return can no longer be determined because the absolute itself has already retreated from the stage. What return points to is merely Friedrich Nietzsche’s tragic monologue at the end of philosophy and the beginning of postmodernism.

To begin with, the Absolute is an unconditioned entity synthesized and constructed through the inference process from one concept to another. It embodies the spirit of the times, reflected in its specific ethical implications and value orientations. For Plato, through the “Idea of the Good”, which governs the world of ideas, his philosophical system and political ideology achieved unity, and the absolute itself acquired normative significance in an ethical sense. In Hegel’s *Elements of Philosophy of Right*, the reality of German society is rationally explained, and corresponding to his logic, he believes that the best political system is a constitutional monarchy. In *The Ages of the World*, Schelling elaborates on the fate of God and man within eternity and time using a language interspersed with historical narrative and dialectical deduction. He explored a series of significant issues regarding divinity, being, existence, freedom, evil, and time, placing everything in its rightful place, unified under the singular absolute spirit. Hegel said, “As far as the individual is concerned, each individual is in any case a child of his time; thus philosophy, too, is its own time comprehended in thoughts” (Hegel 2014, p. 21). The Absolute also depends on the era for its existence.

In addition, the Absolute is a purely metaphysical entity. As the supreme concept, it signifies the ultimate cause and fundamental principle pursued by rational inquiry. Since Aristotle, the question of being has been identified as the core issue of metaphysics, with philosophy being defined as the theory concerning the first being and the highest cause, establishing philosophy as metaphysics. Aristotle said (Aristotle 2016, pp. 104–5), “The question that was asked long ago, is now, and always will be asked, and is always giving rise to puzzles—namely, What is being?—is just the question, What is substance?” From Plato’s theory of ideas to the medieval ontotheology of God, and then to the modern German idealism, this inquiry has run through the entire history of Western metaphysics.

However, the spirit of the times upon which the Absolute relies has already disintegrated. From Plato to Hegel, traditional metaphysics has consistently regarded a supersensory, eternally present, a priori rational conceptual world as its theoretical foundation. Here, various aspects of social life such as law, religious rituals, art, scientific research, etc., constitute the supersensory world, including the authority of reason, God, morality and ethics, ideals and ideas, progress, the happiness of the greatest number of people, culture, and civilization, which determine and encompass the goals and foundations of all existences, unfold and depictions of everything represented in the highest sense of value, forming the various elements of the spirit of the times, the real reliance of the absolute. In this way, the gap between metaphysics and real life disappeared. The scientific revolution of the 17th century and the Enlightenment movement of the 18th century opened the door to the modernization of society, leading to unprecedented social changes. Traditional concepts gradually lost their decisive influence on real society, summarized in Nietzsche’s proclamation: “God is dead”. Many significant events occurred during this decisive transition, leading to the gradual disintegration of the supersensory world, and the Absolute also exited the stage, no longer possessing true binding force. The impotence of God, the ineffectiveness of redemption, and the despair of humanity led to the death of God.

Also, the pursuit for the Absolute has ceased. For philosophy as a whole since the latter half of the 19th century, its active impetus is no longer to adhere to Hegel’s absolute (God) and the dianoetic idealism based on it, but rather to first detach from it critically in

ontology. Among them, Schopenhauer initiated irrationalism. For him, there is no absolute, no reason, no God, and no spirit driving the operation of the world; the only existence is irrational will. Taking will (desire) as the foundation of everything, he believed that life can only oscillate between pain and boredom. Comte initiated positivism, where theories in the purely dianoetic realm formed without empirical scientific research are deemed meaningless. He believed that alongside knowledge based on observed facts, there is no real knowledge; we can only obtain relative knowledge about phenomena, not absolute knowledge about the substance behind phenomena or the first causes. Marx replaced the metaphysical “ontology” mode of thinking with a worldview and methodology of practice. In *Theses on Feuerbach*, he emphasized that the important thing is not to interpret the world, but to change it. And what he aimed to change was the development of purposive rationality, economic rationality, and technical rationality as elements of modernity. What purposive rationality shows is the rejection of value rationality: people no longer have “conscious belief in the unconditional and intrinsic value—whether this is understood as ethical, aesthetic, religious, or however construed—of a specific form of particular comportment purely for itself, unrelated to its outcome” (Max Weber 2019, p. 101). All values are under re-evaluation.

The retreat of absolute means that the spirit has lost its operational foundation. In Genesis, Adam ate the apple from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and was then expelled from the Garden of Eden, symbolizing this negation and exit from the absolute. Only by experiencing the fall in this world can one ultimately return through God’s redemption. In this way, human experiences in this world are subsumed under the Absolute, and the “Last Judgment” gives all experiences a definite ultimate meaning. However, the death of God means that there is no longer a heaven, no longer a last judgment, and the operation of the spirit leads to nothingness. As a result, what is left may be only what Andrew Culp suggests as “hatred for this world”.

4. Philosophy Without God: Kant and Hegel

No “ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ” (idea of the good), no “νοήσεως νόησις” (cognition of the mind), no “One”, no “Indifference”, no “Absolute Idea”, and no “Ereignis”. This is the current state of philosophy. The linguistic turn of the 20th century declared unverifiable philosophical propositions as unscientific and meaningless, demonstrating the impotence of philosophy in the absence of the absolute. In fact, it signifies the death of philosophy. The impossibility of return renders all ontological, ethical, aesthetic, and metaphysical questions unspeakable. As an example, whether it is Kantian ethics or Hegelian philosophy of spirit, the absence of the Absolute has led to the dissolution of their theoretical vitality.

Within Kant’s system, the absence of the Absolute signifies the loss of its primordial foundation for his ethics. In *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant states, “It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be considered good without limitation except a good will” (Kant 1997, p. 7). It is the good will that enables individuals to act out of duty rather than inclination, endowing actions with moral value. However, moral action does not have a direct necessary connection with the good will; if the world lacks a highest basis as a mediator, moral action would only occur contingently. “In all three Critiques, Kant argues that the rational basis for belief in God and immortality rests in morality, rather than in theoretical proofs or in an inference to be drawn from our observation of the design in nature” (Kant 1997, p. xxxiv). God serves both as a solution to the antinomy of practical reason and as the ultimate guarantee of moral felicity. The relationship between morality and happiness is not analytical but synthetic; reason cannot deduce one from the other with necessity. Happiness can only be considered to have moral value when combined with virtue, and morality can only inevitably combine with happiness when based on the highest good (God). Thus, under the presumption of God’s existence, everyone can enjoy happiness within the scope they are entitled to.

Moreover, the death of God signifies the impossibility of an ethical community and the absence of a unified moral law that all humanity should follow. Kant said: “.....the

highest good in the world is possible only insofar as one assumes a supreme cause of nature that has a causality conforming to the moral attitude" (Kant 2002, p. 169). The dissolution of God, whether as its actual death or the fading of its divinity as the highest ideal of moral faith, results in the actions of finite rational beings losing their basis unified with their entire will. The natural descent into the impurity of human cannot match the moral perfection. Human moral behavior no longer has a definite ultimate purpose, no longer lets everyone believe in a world with such a moral ideal, but becomes a utopia. The arrangement of the kingdom of nature and its cooperative purposes is no longer consistent with human moral efforts. When people act out of reason, there is no longer moral hope in their hearts.

Within Hegel's system, the absolute spirit is the driving force and internal law of the entire world's development. Hegel believes that the world is a process of continuous change and development, and all these changes occur under the impetus of the absolute spirit. In this process, spirit moves through the dialectical movement of thesis–antithesis–synthesis. It first moves in the pure "conceptual" world (thesis), then externalizes itself from the concept, forming the natural world with concrete material content (antithesis), and finally returns to the absolute, achieving the unity of substance and subject, essence and phenomenon, and reason and reality (synthesis). However, the exit of the absolute interrupts the dialectical movement of the spirit. The lack of pure negation of return leads us to face a subject without substance, a phenomenon no longer based on any essential foundation, resulting in a permanent fracture between humanity and the world.

Hegel stated, "The immediate existence of spirit, consciousness, has two moments, namely, knowing and the objectivity which is negative to knowing" (Hegel 2018, p. 22). Under the governance of the Absolute, cognition and its object are identical, and objectivity is nothing but spirit itself. It is spirit that creates its objects and then separates itself from them. The process of cognition is the self-cognition of spirit, enabling cognition to overcome its limitations and achieves identity with its object, i.e., "grasping and expressing the true not just as substance but just as much as subject" (Hegel 2018, p. 12). Mediated by intrinsic negativity, the return from negation to the negation of negation overcomes the intellectual thinking of Kant's Fichte and others who followed the law of abstract identity and bridges the dichotomous split in the philosophy of subjectivity between sensibility and rationality, subject and object, knowledge and belief, and so on. Before the return, however, cognition achieves only abstract intellectual thinking, adhering to an either/or isolated Intellectual stipulation. "That is to say, it loses itself in the fixed nonidentity between thoughts, and therefore it does not reach itself, but rather stays stuck in its counterpart in the world of objects" (Hegel 1991, p. 35). The limitations of intellectual thinking prevent reason from encompassing the inevitability of spirit as it manifests itself in the objective world and from unfolding and further realizing itself in the world of actuality and environment in which we now live.

God, in his essence, is a divine and spiritual existence. In *On Idea*, Augustine presented his own version of platonic idealism: "the Ideas have no extra-mental existence, but they exist, eternal and unchangeable, in the mind of God" (Kenny 2004, p. 114). In this way, he articulated Christian opinions towards Plato's theory of Ideas: "The condition of possibility and the criterion of truth of this intellectual insight is none other than God" (Kenny 2004, p. 114), combining rational spirituality with religious faith. This integration profoundly influenced subsequent philosophical developments, manifesting in numerous attempts to unify philosophy and religion. In Hegel's system, religion and religious rituals can be explained through the phenomenon of the spirit. He regarded religion as a stage in the development of the spirit and argued that the foundation of both religion and the nation state is the same. Hegel stated, "There arises here the question of how a religion is grounded, i.e., in what way the substantial spirit comes to the consciousness of peoples. This is a historical matter; its beginnings are inconspicuous. Those who know how to express this spirit are the prophets and the poets" (Hegel 1984, p. 447).

Today is an era marked by the death of divinity and spirituality. The death of God is not just a symbol of atheism, nor is it a theoretical critique of religion; it is also an experien-

tial judgment, accompanied by various inductions from real-life experiences. Tracing the ultimate result of the death of God goes beyond theoretical explanations and manifests in numerous real-life outcomes. For instance, Lefebvre, in *Critique of Everyday Life*, analyzed the prevalent alienation in contemporary society, demonstrating how market-driven quantification has supplanted systems of meaning and belief as the foundation of society. Furthermore, in Vaneigem's *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, he captures the primary issue we all recognize but feel powerless to address: a lingering sense of emptiness, a "being" of "nothing". "Because of its increasing triviality, daily life has gradually become our central preoccupation. No illusion, sacred or deconsecrated, collective or individual can hide the poverty of our daily actions any longer" (Vaneigem 2001, p. 21). This emptiness signifies both the absence of God and the fading away of things and people from the world, ultimately leading to the disintegration of the world: disintegration between substance and subject, essence and phenomenon, and reason and actuality.

5. After Secularization: Religion without God Heralding a Renewed Human Judgment of God

The phrase "God is dead" generally means that the God who has been the center of faith for the Christian tradition is now seen to be nonexistent and that Christianity must henceforth understand itself without him. Thomas J. J. Altizer interprets the death of God as an act of self-negation by God, which is a dual dialectical movement of both spirit and reality. God has died in the disruption and opened itself to man and matter, and in emptying itself into the ephemeral forms of man and matter and fully committing itself to the movement of continued scission and development, the reality of man and matter rises to become spirit itself. "The Absolute acting in the world and history is a self-negating being, gradually but decisively annihilating his original whole, a "fallen" or "descending" whole, to enter more fully into that which is the opposite of its original identity" (Altizer 1963, p. 89). In this way, the death of God can be seen as positive.

Concurrent with the death of God is the secularization of Christianity: "It is a field of human exploration and endeavor from which the gods have fled. The world has become man's task and man's responsibility. Contemporary man has become the cosmopolitan. The world has become his city and his city has reached out to include the world. It is the loosing of the world from religious and quasi-religious understandings of itself, the dispelling of all closed world-views, the breaking of all supernatural myths and sacred symbols..... Secularization is man turning his attention away from worlds beyond and toward this world and this time" (Cox 2013, p. 2). For Harvey Cox, the fate of religious secularization is not a terrible catastrophe, as this direction was already indicated by the Bible. He believed that the process of nature becoming disenchanted began with Genesis, the process of politics moving out of the divine realm began with the Exodus, and the process of values losing their innocence began with the Sinai covenant. These three are the main components of secularization, and thus secularization represents the true intention of the Bible. This process is also reflected in the evolution of the term "secularization". The word "secular" comes from the Latin "saeculum", meaning "the present age" or "the present world", so "secularization" means becoming current worldly. In the form of secularization, God once again creates the spirit of the age upon which he once relied but which has now disintegrated.

Similarly, the morality guided by God in the current era is quite secular. Compared to traditional religious societies, today's era has undergone tremendous changes. After the scientific revolution, the Enlightenment, and the two World Wars, the development of rationalism and pragmatism has constructed a spectacular consumer society and a society of spectacle. Undoubtedly, its core is individualistic and hedonistic. "In this kind of religion it is not man who serves God, but God who is mobilized and made to serve man and his purposes—whether these purposes be economic prosperity, free enterprise, social reform, democracy, happiness, security, or 'peace of mind'" (Herberg 1960, pp. 268–69). In summary, the God of the capitalist era has redirected the logic of capital accumulation

to dominate social life. However, it continues to evolve. The spirit of capitalism described in “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”, which is characterized by restraint, asceticism, proactive endeavor, religious piety, and treating capital accumulation as a responsible action, may be in the process of disappearing.

“Capitalism is an extreme form of religion..... The capitalist religion puts money in the place of God and replaces faith in God with faith in credit, which is, ultimately, faith in faith” (Agamben and Heron 2016). Or, further, capitalism is a result of the secularization of religion, and capital is an incarnation of God and objectification. In addition to Max Weber’s arguments about the connection between economic indebtedness, moral responsibility, and religious guilt, Walter Benjamin’s argument seems to have broader and more universal significance. Firstly, it is a cultic religion. In capitalism, everything gains significance only insofar as it is associated with the completion of some worship, rather than adhering to a doctrine or a concept. Secondly, this worship is eternal; it is a celebration of worship “without respite and without mercy”. In capitalism, distinguishing between weekdays and holidays is impossible; there is only one sacred workday on which work is consistent with the celebration of worship. Thirdly, the worship of capitalism does not aim at redemption or the compensation of sin but at sin itself: a terrible sense of guilt that cannot be escaped grips worship, not to atone for its sins in worship but to universalize sin... and ultimately include God himself in the system of sin... God has not died; he has been incorporated into human destiny.

In the most primal sense, God must bear complete responsibility for what occurred in the Garden of Eden, regardless of whether he chose to intervene in events he had long foreseen. As creations, original sin stems from God’s act of creation. After all, humans are inherently driven by emotions that defy explanation as they navigate the world. At the time of the Last Judgment, God finally imposes punishment upon himself for the consequences of all the innate sins bestowed upon humanity. This is seen as a form of redemption for the creatures, as the perpetual movement of atonement comes to a halt and they are freed from what was imposed upon them prior to their existence. Therefore, at the moment of the Last Judgment, humanity should also judge God. However, history has shown that God’s self-judgment did not precede humanity’s judgment of him. Humanity’s judgment of God truly occurred during the bourgeois revolution that overturned feudal society and within the various divisions that arose after the retreat of the Absolute, prompting God’s lamb to ponder deeply: “What has the world given us but this swaying of grass...” (Perse 1983, p. 129).

6. Concluding Remarks

Human beings are determined by God for their existence, and this determination is not only theological and ontological. In Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory, this determinacy is reflected in the relationship between the subject and the “little other” and the “Big Other”. In psychological construction, the self of the subject can only be established through dependence on the other at the opposite end of the imaginary axis (Lacan 1966, p. 549). The self cannot exist independently; the little other is always an indispensable part of the imaginary relationship. The Big Other, on the other hand, serves as a transcendental structure, a mental force with its controlling, grasping network of symbols and signifiers, regulating all social activities between mutually beneficial subjects. It corresponds to the transcendent God/the Absolute, but only when the latter is not reduced to a metaphysical object of deduction or faith but rather encompasses all its social or practical dimensions and ultimate results. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). Similarly, psychoanalysis proves that the unconscious is structured as a language and is the discourse of the Other.

God is dead, and humanity ultimately grounds its existence on quicksand. We observe that postmodern discourse critiques the non-reality of concepts such as truth, objectivity, subjectivity, and meaning, accusing the edifice of modern theory of being built on ideological illusions yet failing to establish a solid foundation for postmodernism. When

all that is solid melts into air and all knowledge is merely the here-and-now, discrete, and fragmentary cogito, thought inevitably falls into the abyss of nihilism, hindering humanity's progress. As Baudrillard (1987, p. 83) dramatically puts it: "It is so much more fun to see our universe destined to fatality, which is not transcendent but immanent in our very processes, in their superfusion, in their overdrive, in their surmultiplication, immanent in our banality, which is also the indifference of things towards their own meaning, the indifference of effects towards their very causes". In this process, the operation of the spirit loses its ultimate destination.

There is no longer a return to the Absolute; thus, the synthesis between subject and object, form and content, logic and experience, and knowledge and faith once again maintains a discontinuous nature. Is this not the "experience of being lost" that Gnosticism pointed out? Humans—or rather, spiritual humans—have become strangers who have drifted from the divine world to this world. However, they may no longer hear the true revelatory word that Gnosticism envisaged as leading to salvation. We cannot recall the vanishing spirituality; God is dead. Yet, it is important to note that anything might become the seed of a possible Absolute. For instance, capitalism has become the new religion, "Silicon Valley is one of the most religious places in America" (Carolyn 2022), and "crosses in late antiquity find a parallel in smartphones today" (An 2024), and so on. This is a series of misrecognitions—we can see "the subordination of 'the religious' and the ethical to the realm of economics" (Coudert 2023)—increasing their influence through the form of continuously reproduced discourses, whether in philosophy, economics, law, management, or education, preordaining for humanity a path of identity assurance devoid of spiritual operation, thus leading to a loss of direction. Therefore, we must keep clear heads and soberly envisage the times. As Borges said: "there is nothing on earth that does not contain the seed of a possible Hell; a face, a word, a compass, a cigarette advertisement.....".

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