

## **The Death of God, the Death of Faith and the Arrival to Nothingness Following Lyotard, Heidegger, Nietzsche and Maffesoli in the Definition of the Postmodern Subject**

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*For me, the knowledge of the world in which we live is a necessary condition to act responsibly in it when  
participating in its day-to-day construction.*

**HUMBERTO MATURANA**

*“Nietzsche did not form the project of killing god, but he found him dead in the soul of his time”.*

**Camus**

*“Rather: that man abandons the center to head towards the X, is possible only because there is nothing left of the  
self as such”*

**Vattimo**

*The postmodern would be that which claims the unrepresentable in the modern and in the presentation itself; that  
which refuses the consolation of the beautiful forms, to the consensus of a taste that would allow experimenting in  
common the nostalgia of the impossible...*

**Lyotard**

*“It is said that Lucifer banished the ungodly for considering it without scruples, without feelings, without  
commitment, without ideology, without sexual preferences, and whose sole objective was to worship itself and for  
itself”*

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### **1. Introduction**

We start this essay with the understanding that everything that is said here does not have anything to do with demons, which attack our being, our ego, our spiritual side, it is not the dispute between Lucifer and God or the success of one over the other, it is only finding the current forms of the postmodern subject. Thus, the following essay is organized in the following manner:

In the first part we paraphrase the concept of post-modernism from several points of view, namely, Lyotard, Vattimo, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Cammus and Maffesoli. In the second part the post-modern subject is characterized as well as its way of knowing.

All of the above answers questions such as: What makes up the knowledge of the post-modern subject? What is it based on? Through what is it based? What is its origin?

## **II. Entering the game. What is post-modern?**

We will start describing the different views of the most outstanding philosophers of post-modernism from Lyotard and Vattimo up to Maffesoli, trying to understand that the phenomenon of post-modernism is not a simple appearance, a fashion or state-of-the-art artifact, but a social construction that has strong foundations which consolidate it at present as a theoretical, political and ideological option for millions of human beings around the world.

Starting by Jean-Francois Lyotard, this French philosopher says that the “post-modern” implies a skepticism with regard to the meta-narratives...the narrative function loses its functions, the great hero, the great dangers...the great purpose. All of this is dispersed in clouds of linguistic elements. The meta-narratives are global projects that have a legitimating function and whose eventual implementation is a condition of its failure (Buenfil, 1995).

There is no longer that illusion, that probing fantasy that allows creation under the rules and norms of the rational society and in consequence, reaches decadence and distrust in relation to the progress of mankind.

It is the setting in which the functionality, immediacy, unity and harmony of society is questioned, all of them assumptions of the functionalist model, as well as the duality (idem). The planning model of the societies of Pearson has lost.

In post-modernism, language is not limited to communicability-as Habermas would say-and there is certain incommensurability among narrative (popular versus scientific language). Instead of a great narrative Lyotard proposes the small narrative in all fields, the recognition of the heteromorphisms and the temporality and regionality of the consensus achieved. In post-modernism, changes in the perception of space, time, and the human community arise and are difficult to specify (Lyotard, 1998).

It is evident here what many have not wanted to accept, that is to say, a change in the cognitive systems brought about by the theoretical crisis of the method and object of study in the rational science-also called systematic-to analyze or at least understand our civilizations. It is to be noted the excessive use of positivism and its accelerated rhythm based on the old simplified rationality, rigid, corrective, fragmented and partial, dominated by the sectional specter that lack an overall view and impregnate the foundations of the systems of social or cultural formation of today.

Lyotard's complaint is precisely the lack of precision of the concepts, analysis categories and fundamental theoretical premises that address those changes in the perception of time, and of the human unities that emerge in times of post-modernity. On the other hand, Vattimo point out that modernity has concluded in some of its essential aspects: its self-referential assessment. The modern age starts in the XV century with the idea of a progressive emancipation process whose center is Europe. It is evident then that modernity ends when it is no longer possible to speak of history as a unit process with a fixed midpoint (West) (Vattimo, 1997).

It is no longer possible to speak of an absolute time, nor relative, only of a field of time in a unique calendar; neither of a unique midpoint nor a unique history. Societies are now defined as complex, as in risks, in which their main characteristic is the emergency, the undetermined, in which variations are converted into hypervariations (Pérez and Guzmán; 2005). These are the societies which mass media show as non-transparent but complex and chaotic, multiple, in a relative chaos in which mass media have become an efficient medium to promote fragmentation and not the unity of the way of looking at the world.

In this regard, Vattimo raises the issue that post-modernism represents a change in all the styles that encourage the production of ideas in our era (Vattimo; 1997). This production of malformed ideas (from the modern point of view), where are they generated? It seems to us in the first place, from the excessive abuse of the great positivism. We will explain later. Secondly, post-modernity reflects itself in the fragmented minds of the subjects where there is no history that allows raising awareness of past facts in order to improve the future. This characteristic permeates each corner, each specialty of the social matters.

It is appropriate to make a first observation: Lyotard as well as Vattimo propose modernity as a process of destruction, dissolution and erosion of the foundations of the modern world. In his book "The end of modernity, nihilism and hermeneutics of the post-modern culture" Gianni Vattimo proposes that in post-modernity, the world of the truth has become a fable, which is no longer authentic, because authenticity- the proper, the reappropriation- has perished itself with the death of God. An interpretation shared by Nietzsche and Heidegger.

For Maffesoli the acceptance of the barbarism that each individual harbors, and the evil as an integral part of the post-modern society signals the end of a cycle where the attempts by western reasoning for denying them did not succeed.

In this regard, he says: "the true problem is that we have desired in an aseptic society, to deny that man is an aggressive animal, that there is shadow within him and evil exists. The European- and Mexican- societies are like hospitals in which people no longer die from hunger, but from boredom" (Maffesoli, 2006). Maffesoli implies that in a multicultural society, evil is built in; there is a degree of tolerance, a recognition that the other tribe is not like mine, it does not dress or feel the same, but it has a right to exist.

The era of illustration ends with post-modernity, thus called by Adorno and Horkheimer (Lyotard, 1998). The emphasis is now on non-institutional religiousness, there is a return to magic, to shamanism, to Buddhism, to the worship of evil and Lucifer disguised as God. Maffesoli created the concept of "tribes" to refer to the existence of heterogeneous groups that share a sense of belonging (sexual, religious, musical...) highlighting the social fragmentation and the expiration of traditional institutions, institutions we can understand like school, family, church, and others. The New Age is an example of solidarity and fraternity that exists in these tribes and the synergy that is produced between the archaic and the technological advance, since they rely on the Internet to communicate, but also promote exclusion and shock processes. This tribe in particular has in common to give importance to the present, they do not delay the enjoyment for the kingdom of God, they fight the idea of western progress and show the propagation of the eastern thought.

With Nietzsche, post-modernity is where man explicitly recognizes the absence of foundation as constitutive of its own condition, that is to say, the death of God. In post-modernity "there is nothing left of the self" (Idem). For Heidegger, on the other hand, the subject in post-modernity is annihilated as soon as it is completely converted in value. We can say then that for Nietzsche it is the death of God and for Heidegger it is the devaluation of values. This raises the question, how is this to be understood?

Both of them agree on something: the supreme values have disappeared; this is summed up precisely in the supreme value par excellence, God. It is only there, where it is not the final and blocking instance of the supreme value of God, values may be displayed in their true nature which consists of its possibility of converting and transforming itself by the action of indefinite processes. For the purpose of the intention of this work, we agree on this convergence of ideas around modernity to characterize the postmodern subject.

### ***III. Characterizing the post-modern subject***

The Nobel prize winner in literature Albert Camus in his book "The Rebel" proposes that Nietzsche did not draw up the project to kill God, but found him dead in the soul of its time and the validity of Nietzsche is due to the modern nihilism he proclaimed, under the proclamation of the death of God, which is more evident today than a century ago (Vattimo, 1997). Because the death of God drags many other deaths, atavistic and modern, those today are invoked as symptoms of our post-modernism, and determine characteristics of the post-modern subject. Let us look at some sociological, psychological and some epistemic characterizations:

- a) In post-modern society, the subject is of a more radical and profound character towards subversion rather than revolution, at the same time that values more the body, hedonism and the present.
- b) The subjects are guided more by the spirit of adventure and the aspiration of making their life a masterpiece rather than the rejection of a rational life planning.
- c) Death of a subject that defines himself as a creature of a creator that encloses and shelters him;
- d) Death of categorical distinctions between truth and falsehood and between essence and appearance;
- e) Death of the principle that guarantees certainty and the possibility of internal unity in the subject, call it reason or consciousness;
- f) Death of confidence in the march of history and with it, the promise of an individual redemption in a universal reunion;
- g) Death of stable world views and of all centers around which it may be possible to articulate our ideas, death, in a nutshell, of the "illusion" of a substantial and stable ego. The so-called end of the ideologies and utopias would be the political and cultural corollary of this sensory emptying.

But in post-modernity nihilism does not only occur, it is more than that, that is to say, it is more than the death of all transcendental senses, because in its Nietzschean sense it also refers to our impossibility to overcome grief: in one sense the throne of the great truths is empty (Idem), but on the other hand we keep thinking as a function of that throne. Fatal combination that according to Nietzsche obeys the fact that we killed the myths in order to liberate ourselves, but we immortalize the corpse in the same process of the murder.

In view of this, several questions related to nihilism arise: Is there life possible without a stable horizon of sense? Up to what point should we free ourselves from myths and values, if the costs in disintegration, individual as well as collective, are greater than the benefits resulting from such liberation? Can we live with a self-image where the ego is not more than a description among many possibilities, devoid of connection or foundation?

However, nihilism is not only a state of affairs, but also a state of encouragement, or rather discouragement. Or according to Nietzsche, "the recognition of sustained waste of force, the agony of the in vain (...) being ashamed of himself in front of himself, as if one had disappointed himself for a long time.

No longer have an absence of meaning, but a wear and tear experience in the search of a foundation that trickles away. The loss of meaning becomes inseparable from the fatigue by the futile task of substituting it with new meanings. It is typical of nihilism, according to Nietzsche, this harshness forces one to not only experience it, but also suffer from it.

It is a condition that opposite to the Christian Calvary does not purify nor redeem, but on the contrary: we are more exhausted because it is there that requires a greater strength and self-confidence to build our own home in the middle of a wasteland. The concomitance of the wear and tear and waste that accompanies our experience of nihilism, joins the agony of the great truths with the deterioration of our own personal health (not only emotional, and psychological, but also physical as in the case of Nietzsche himself). It is a difficult situation: incapable of believing, but too tired to enjoy outside of the atavic world of belief.

This poses a greater difficulty. Because, for Nietzsche, nihilism, when looked at in a positive manner, is an alchemical state in which, from the ashes of the destroyed values, the possibility of our greatest freedom of the spirit emerges: enjoy ourselves without the heavy burden of heredity, morality and the acquired disciplinary issues; to plan our lives like someone who makes of his biography an authentically personal narrative. But for that, there needs to be conviction and not only sensibility. And the orphanage of the rupture shadows the freedom that such rupture sets into motion. The risk is being encapsulated in the grief, instead of reviving undisclosed from our confrontation with emptiness.

#### ***IV. The traditional institutions versus the non-formal ones***

The expiration of the traditional institutions is evident. Institutions we can understand as the school, the family, and the church among them, and the birth of cognition forming agents that break the rules and give rise to the non-rules. What is giving us this crisis?: The belief in nothing. The disappearance of faith, the arbitrary rejection of cold consciences, what requires faith for salvation and could include anything from Teleology to Ideology. Faith and similar values are then ruled out because for the minds of the subjects in formation (Teenagers, students, teachers and others) they do not have veracity, objective substance, they are invalid and functioning only as the other lie that never produces any strategic benefit.

The educational systems have not been able to defend the interruption of reason, critical analysis and common sense. To hell with faith. To hell with Teleology, to hell with my father and mother, to hell with God. The subject born and emerged from post-modernity is someone who does not yield to any authority and does not accept any doctrine not supported by anything, in the hyperrelativity.

This brings us to think that the effect of post-modernity in a social level is not alike all over the world, that is to say, its influence is felt in first world countries where everything is already boring and they require something else. The post-modernity arises in the higher level, that is to say:

- a) In developed countries that, through technology and mass media influence on population segments with obvious semantic limits like for example, teenagers and non-reflective subjects of certain social class and in the
- b) Elite classes in underdeveloped countries.

This subject, that is liberated with information that enters his brain day-to-day, with the way of thinking of the Christian and social morale inherent to modern culture, and is fooled into thinking that is a free spirit or the superman who builds his cognition of the broken, of the nothingness that is provoked from the outside.

As with nihilism, which not only supposes the death of God, but also of any supra-value, its improvement implies burying the first as well as the second. In this way, the collapse of the Christian morale opens in turn, the possibility of overcoming every symbolic order that confines subjectivity. A badly born subjectivity.

Just as the failing Marxism, the positivism of Comte, and the neo-positivism of Mach are ill. The two of them develop in the womb of their own destruction: The Post-modernity, like the shadow of the more beautiful demons, exponents of evil and precursors against the supreme value (God), the unholy and Lucifer reign in this fertile land of the non-faith.

### Conclusions

The post-modernity has, as its only implication the death of God in our time; it is the crucifixion of the modern Jesus Christ. The post-modern condition is defined as a distancing with respect to the basic ideals of modernity-progress, improvement and criticism, vanguard- a distancing that supposes the implicit rejection of the new, the modern, as the only valuable thing. It is worth noting that this unknown spirit is precisely, that it is not a question of only one style, but a different way of being in the world which produces a very particular bias not only to our aesthetical values but it also affects our cultural, social and economic values.

The cognitive formation systems (education-school), moral formation (Family) and spiritual formation (Churches) have failed and post-modernity is based on them. As Seneca would say: "We should not worry about living many years, but living them satisfactorily; because living a long time depends on fate, living satisfactorily depends on your soul. Life is long if it is fulfilled; and it becomes fulfilled when the soul has recovered the possession of its own good and transferred to itself its domain" (Seneca, letters to Lucilius).

And I conclude with Savater, when he says that, from the point of view of ethics, the desirable political system will have to respect to the maximum or limit minimally the public aspects of human freedom, it will also insist on the social responsibilities of the acts and omissions of everyone, treat as persons and put ourselves in the place of our peers, and relativize our interests by means of laws and institutions that support and enforce them, without losing sight of rights, which we have of the fact we are humans. A constitutional and human right that must be complied with and enforced, not only with words but with facts.

The cognitive formation systems (education-school), moral formation (family) and spiritual formation (church) must then take care of what Savater refers to.

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