



# ON THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF THE SACRED AND FINANCE

*Posted on March 1, 2023 by Diego Fusaro*



The destruction of the element that Rudolf Otto defines as the *tremendum*, that is, that perception of the sovereign majesty of the divine that generates in man a feeling of creatural finitude, is indispensable for the unfolding of the absolute subjectivism coessential to the will to power and its presupposition of man as an omnipotent and limitless entity. For this reason—Otto explains—the sacred is the authentic *mirum*, since it shows the "totally other" (*Ganz-Anderes*), sending back to a different and superior dimension, with respect to that of only human things. The sacred—Otto writes—coincides with the "the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures." The seductive, as well as treacherous, promise of the serpent—*eritis sicut dii*—allows us to fully understand how the most desacralizing power, that is, capital, pretends to become more and more similar to God, as omnipotent, unlimited, inscrutable, above everything and everyone. In this meaning, the *θέωσις*, the "divine becoming" thus emerges as a figure of the unlimited and of pride, quite distinct from the *deitas* theorized by Eckhart.

At the mercy of techno-scientific Prometheism, and an order of things in which "sudden gains/pride and immoderation have generated" (*Inferno*, XVI, 72-74), man ceases to recognize himself *imago Dei* and pretends to be himself *Deus-homo homini Deus*, with the syntax of the Feuerbach of *The Essence of Christianity*—in the fulfillment of the ancient temptation of the serpent. Herein lies the arrogant boldness of the man who wants to elevate himself "Who opposeth, and is lifted up above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself as if he were God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Prevailing over the entire horizon, prefiguring ever new disasters of instrumental reason, is the Promethean will of human self-management of the world with no further links to transcendence and, at this point, guided only by the nihilistic logic of the will to power of the planetary technocracy. The biblical image of Noah's Ark, which saves the living in the name of God, is contrasted with the Titanic, as an image of unbridled technology and Promethean imperialism, which causes the whole world to sink under the deceptive promise of its liberation.

In the reified spaces of techno-form civilization, there are no longer the limits of the *φύσις* of the Greeks or of the Christian God—in the age of the *ἄπειρον*, of the "unlimited" elevated to the only horizon of meaning, there survives exclusively the factual limit, *id est*, the limit that the uncontainable techno-scientific power finds every time in front of itself and that it punctually surpasses, in order to be able to fully deploy all its premises and its promises. The technoscientific *Gestell*, the "dominant system" of *Technik* in the sense clarified by Heidegger, does not promote a horizon of meaning, nor does it open

scenarios of salvation and truth—it simply grows without limitation. And it does so by surpassing all limits and by self-empowering itself without end. It emerges, therefore, fully justifying the fear of Zeus, in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, when Zeus fears that man, thanks to the power of τέχνη, can become self-sufficient and autonomously obtain that which previously he could only hope to achieve through prayer and submission to divine power.

As Emanuele Severino *has shown*, if technique is the condition for the implementation of any end, it follows that not hindering the progress and development of technique becomes the true ultimate end, in the absence of which no other can be implemented. So, following Severino's syntax, with the decline of truth there remains in the field only technique, i.e., the open space of the forces of becoming, whose confrontation is ultimately decided by its power and certainly not by its truth. In addition to this, the techno-capitalist system reduces the world to the limits of calculating reason, so that what cannot be calculated, measured, possessed and manipulated is, *eo ipso*, considered as non-existent. The logic of the *plus ultra*, founding of techno-capital, is determined in the ethical and religious sphere according to the aforementioned figure of the violation of all that is inviolable, which presupposes achieving the neutralization of God as a symbol of the νόμος. The libertarian instance of the Enlightenment is reversed in its opposite, as already evidenced in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. The annihilation of every taboo, of every law and of every limit, gives rise to *the new taboo* of life that is sufficient unto itself.

Freedom without limits; or rather—more properly—the anomic caprice and the "infinite evil" of self-referential and deregulated growth, precipitates into the slavery of the compulsion to transgression and the violation of all that is inviolable; hence into the falsely emancipatory imperative that prescribes enjoyment without impediment or delay, aiming only at individual self-interest and the unreflective rage of growth as an end in itself. In this way, calculating reason—the "arid life of the intellect" of which the *young Hegel wrote*—sets itself up as the judge that distinguishes what is real from what is not real, what is meaningful from what is meaningless, what is valuable from what is worthless. To allow techno-capitalism to develop without limits of any kind, be they material or immaterial—this sounds like one of the most implausible definitions that could be postulated of the regressive myth of progress, civilization's unreflective cult of integral reification, whose members are increasingly converted, Heidegger emphasized, into mere "priests of technics" and simple apostles of *capital's march* of *claritate in claritatem*.

To provoke the disjunction of Desire with the Law, so that the former can develop without limits and

inhibitions, according to the figure of that violation of all that is inviolable on which rests the essence of the absolute chrematistic system as metaphysics of the unlimited, is one of the falsely emancipatory cornerstones of the disordered order of the civilization of the markets. It is what was already glimpsed in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*: "But then, I ask, what will become of man, without God and without future life? Is everything then permitted, everything lawful?" Tod Gottes points to the fulfillment of nihilism as a process of devaluation of values and the twilight of the foundations. It coincides with the "transvaluation of all values," the *Umwertung aller Werte* enunciated by Nietzsche.

The nihilism of the death of God seems to be concretized in four decisive determinations, which trace the contours of the epoch of the existing anomic society of the evaporated father *post mortem Dei*:

- a. on the ontological level, if God is dead, then "everything is possible," as marketing strategists keep repeating endlessly and as the mechanics of the technical reduction of being to an exploitable depth reveal;
- b. on the strictly moral level, if God is dead, then everything is permitted and no figure of the Law survives;
- c. his means, therefore, that everything is indifferent and equivalent, without a hierarchical rank or an order of values, in the triumph of a generalized relativism by which everything becomes relative in the form of commodity (the "dictatorship of relativism" thematized by Ratzinger);
- d. at both the moral and ontological levels, if God is dead and everything is possible and permitted, it follows that every limit, every simulacrum of the Law and every barrier are, as such, an evil to be overthrown and a limit to be violated and surpassed.

The death of God as the dissolution of every order of values and truth (Nietzsche) and as the evaporation of the very idea of the father (Lacan) is, for this very reason, coherent with the dynamics of development of capital *absolutus*—in the globalized perimeters of the total and totalitarian market society everything is licit, subject to there always being more and more, and to the availability of the corresponding exchange value, elevated to a *new monotheistic divinity*. The desertification of transcendence and the depopulation of heaven are coessential to the dynamics of the absolutization of the mercantilized plane of immanence, whose most appropriate figurative expression seems to be identified by the desert, as Salvatore Natoli *has suggested*.

On the basis of what has been underlined by Heidegger and by Hölderlin, the epoch of economic nihilism corresponds to a *Weltnacht* in which darkness is so dominant that it makes it impossible to see the situation of misery into which those of us who find ourselves living in the epoch of the fled gods have fallen:

"The default of God means that no god any longer gathers men and things unto himself, visibly and unequivocally, and by such gathering disposes the world's history and man's sojourn in it. The default of God forebodes something even grimmer, however. Not only have the gods and the god fled, but the divine radiance has become extinguished in the world's history. The time of the world's night is the destitute time, because it becomes ever more destitute. It has already grown so destitute, it can no longer discern the default of God as a default" (Heidegger, ["Wozu Dichter?" "What are Poets for?"](#)).

The death of God announced by Nietzsche and evoked by Heidegger corresponds, in effect, to that complete nihilistic de-divinization of the world that produces the loss of meaning and finality, of unity and horizon. The ongoing de-divinization—which, with the Hegel of the *Phenomenology*, we could also understand as a "depopulation of heaven" ([Entvölkerung des Himmel](#))—corresponds to the emptying of all meaning and of all ulteriority with respect to the capitalist market, which has become the exclusive horizon—capitalist mono-mundane immanentization dissolves any point of reference other than the commodity form, before which everything becomes relative. Things and men, more and more interchangeable, cease to be "gathered" in a framework of meaning. And they are projected, as isolated and unconnected fragments, into the dark infinite space of the global market, hypostatized in the sole sense of petrified universal history.

With Heidegger's syntax, the "splendor of God" as a value of values and as a symbol of symbols has been extinguished and, with it, the very idea of a sense of the flow of universal history and of a meaning that exceeds mere exchange value. Everything wanders in the cosmic void of fragmentation and global precariousness, ready to be manipulated by the will to power of infinite growth and the [dérailson de la raison économique](#). Following [Pasolini's analysis](#), this is the essence of the new "Power that no longer knows what to make of Church, Homeland, Family"—and that, moreover, must neutralize them as so many obstacles to its own self-realization.

The death of God corresponds to the post-metaphysical nihilistic relativism proper to the unlimited extension of the commodity form elevated to the only horizon of meaning and to the unlimited will to

power of technical endeavor. According to the teaching we draw from Weber and his considerations on the *Protestantische Ethik*, a fully functioning capitalism no longer needs the superstructural system—the "mantle" over its shoulders, in Weberian grammar—that was initially indispensable to it. Taking the discourse beyond Weber, it must precisely discard it, given that now the absence of that powerful support of meaning is as vital as its presence was before.

Post-metaphysical consumerist relativism prevents the recognition of the veritative figure of limits (ethical, religious, philosophical). And, with synergic movement, it empowers the infinite tastes of liberalized consumption, and detached from any perspective of value. Along with that, it draws a reified landscape of monads exercising their will of unlimited consumerist power, free to do whatever they want, as long as they do not violate the will of power of others and, *ça va sans dire*, as long as they have the corresponding exchange value.

The fanaticism of economics cannot withstand the axiological, veritative and transformative power of philosophy. It is founded, instead, on the power of technoscience, which serves it to produce always new commodities and new gadgets destined to increase the valorization of value. Compulsive consumerism itself, which has become the ordinary lifestyle of the inhabitant of the integrally reified cosmopolis, is nothing more than the subjective reverberation of the techno-capitalist paradigm and its [fundamental structure](#).

The new techno-capitalist power, in [Pasolini's words](#) "is no longer satisfied with a 'man who consumes,' but pretends that no other ideologies than that of consumption are conceivable." It allows the permissiveness of "a neo-secular hedonism, blindly oblivious to any humanist value" to prevail ubiquitously and without any free zones. The new power, with respect to which nothing else is going to be anarchic, does not accept the existence of entities that are not so in the form of merchandise and exchange value: "Power," [Pasolini explains](#), "has decided to be permissive because only a permissive society can be a consumer society." Man himself, reduced to the rank of consumer, ends up being himself consumed by the techno-capitalist apparatus.

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