

A MODERN AVATAR OF RELIGION: THE GLOBAL INDUSTRIAL REORGANIZATION OF MANKING

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ABSTRACT

Religion and religious feelings do not disappear. They can take new forms and invest new objects. The transcendent God is not the condition sine qua non of a religion. The contemporary world is neither areligious nor disenchanting. It is configured and engulfed by a religion that is different from traditional religions. This new religion was baptized by Henri de Saint-Simon as the industrial religion, a new type of Christianity (in his mind). His conviction was that the entire society should be organized as a manufacture, or in present day terms, of the enterprise. This new religion has found new expressions: cybernetics and the theory of organization, management sciences. It is a force that intends to transform and to mold the whole human existence in a certain manner, based upon the model of cybernetics and information technology. Efficiency is one of its slogans. The end-result should be a world that is entirely transformed into an organization, run by the central organ that sets the goals and controls the feedback loop – world government. In practice, this should also lead to the building of a collective intelligence, which will absorb everyone and coordinate all the activities of the individuals. The world is now on the road to an unprecedented form of tyranny, which can be described as the scientific organization of life.

Keywords: tyranny, management, freedom, cybernetics, political philosophy.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mankind is religious. Religiosity takes many forms. Religiosity is not bound to an organized form of a cult of a transcendent being, polytheism, or a pantheistic religion, etc. It can be invested in other kinds of beliefs and worldviews. Values change and societies look for another source for its norms, models, laws than God or the natural law and so on. The source of the norms that should guide and mold the way people live is the manufacture, the industrial workshop, the plant, or the enterprise. So, the source of values, norms, rules, and coherence of society changes. And this source is a modern one. It is the realm of technique, although even this realm of modern technique has its roots in the religious one, in the organization of life and work in the monasteries of earlier Middle Ages. The new form of religiosity has been called the industrial religion by Henri Saint-Simon and his likes, though it has taken other forms as well. It might be called a religion of power of efficiency, of

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technology as such. Another form it takes is the theory of management or the theory of organization, and it is expressed in the tendency of “the world to become organization” and the tendency of “organization to become the world”, as the French philosopher Baptiste Rappin expresses it¹⁵⁸.

Paraphrasing Martin Heidegger, he describes the contemporary existence as being-thrown in organizations. This industrial religion is in a sense a defining *imago mundus* of the Western world (and of its soul or lack thereof). This image and the transformation it produced in Western society have expanded and occupied the whole planet. With it, come models of what human existence is, what the world is, how must society and individual life be organized, etc. The meaning and understanding of nature changes along the way, too. Nature is transformed and is considered as something that can be exploited. Expressions such as the Great Reset refer to this de facto religion of the Western world (one among others).

Industry means something more than an economic branch centered around producing manufactured things. It denotes a point of view, a worldview. It is a construction that is the object of a belief, a religion¹⁵⁹; according to Saint-Simon industry can mean every kind of activity or thing that is useful, theory and practice alike, the works of the hand and the works of the spirit¹⁶⁰. The Great Reset and the dystopian and totalitarian reorganization of the world that is ongoing is a reconfiguration of the order along the lines prescribed by this industrial religion. Even concepts and activities as de-industrialization belong to this imaginary, being a product of this belief system that underlies the Western world for centuries.

II. INDUSTRY. WHAT IT MEANT

In the sixteenth century the meaning of industry was the economic one, denoting the totality of operations, which took part in the production and circulations of richness, later acquiring the generic meaning of productive activity¹⁶¹. In the eighteenth century, another meaning added to the word, industry pertaining to the inventions of useful machines in the arts and trades; it meant also industrial technique, “machinisme” – the modern sense. To the original meaning of term, industry also denoted a kind of secret activity, an activity, or an application. The term derived from the Latin *industrius* which meant to be active, diligent, etc. *Struere* meant also to conspire, to plan in secret, to calculate, to foresee – *tramer*, *machination*. It was derived from ancient Greek *endon* and *struere*. *Struere* meant to bring order, to put in order, to organize, and to construct. *In-dustria* refers to the

¹⁵⁸ Baptiste Rappin, *Au fondement du management. Théologie de l'organisation [At the foundation of management. Theology of the organisation]*, Nice, Ovadia Publishing House, 2014, p. 31.

¹⁵⁹ Pierre Musso, *La religion industrielle [The industrial religion]*, Nantes, The Institute for Advanced Studies/Fayard, 2017, p. 10.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

¹⁶¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 31–32.

interiority of mankind, for the Latin grammarian Festus *ab intro struendo* stood for an activity or someone who works also for the inside, for the household¹⁶².

The problem of industrial religion refers to an anthropological revolution that makes use of the religious mechanism present in man. And as such it regards even the spiritual and concrete aspect of the life of individuals caught in its net. Every new social order implies the modification of the human mind both at the individual and collective level. As Jacques Ellul once observed, the problem of the technique is the most eminent spiritual problem of contemporary human existence. Management and cybernetics as techniques of organization are not limited to what one call in a limited sense and an organization, enterprise, the Mafia etc. They extend to all of society. An organization is an association of people who aim to achieve something and whose activities are ordered to this end. This attitude is applied nowadays to the whole existence.

The existence of what is called in a day-to-day sense industry was made possible because there is such a thing as *industry* in a more ancient sense, being understood as creativity and as constructing (*struere*) that is inside (in), an exteriorization or manifestation of an inner structure or power. Industry – with all its achievements – works as a mediator between a belief and reason, between believing and doing. In its economic and technical sense, obeys certain belief and imposes or manifest a material power. It combines the mystery of the faith with the power of rationality and material power (and a faith in technique in mankind, too). Just as dialectics is supposed to do, industry – a form of faith and belief in human ingenuity – brings apparent contraries together. It is a system of faith that prioritizes the so-called practical and mechanical arts. Industry is a religion of action based on a pragmatic kind of reason. The industrial religion signals a shift in the structure of the Western world from scholasticism/ philosophy/dialectics to the domain of the mechanical arts, of practical efficiency, and a shift from heaven to earth, from nature to technique, a shift towards the mastering of nature. Just one is supposed to triumph over the adversary in a dialectical dispute, so industry is supposed to triumph over nature. Though the domains of philosophy and argumentation on one side, and the domain of practical ingenuity and mechanical arts there is a difference, at least for ancient Greeks, there was an analogy between the two activities since both made use of the same metal categories and concepts¹⁶³.

Even though back then the act of fabrication was mostly manual, and techniques were a tool, there is a continuation between the ancient technique and the modern one. The use of hands mean manipulation, the *savoir-faire* (an implicit kind of knowledge) and the use of other things as instruments. Other aspects of industry are reflection, invention, and conception. Even if nowadays machines are running whatever is left of industry, the hand is still present at least symbolically in the meaning of industry. The manufacture embodied the idea, and the unity of the natural

¹⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 34.

¹⁶³ J.P. Vernant in *Ibidem*, p. 26.

world and the artificial one created by man through *techne*. The birth of the industry represents the segue from spiritual to temporal power¹⁶⁴. It meant even “qui prépare en lui-même”¹⁶⁵. *Industria* is first an inner reality, in the body and afterward it gets projected outside, taking form in the technical objects it produces, in the city, in the production of machines and in society as such. During history, the realm to which *industria* applies extends itself. As already mentioned, among other meanings, the term industry used to mean the capacity to do something, ingenuity, the art to make something pertaining to a *savoir-être*. It also meant the – in French in the fifteen century – the practicing of a manual activity, a trade, a *Handwerk*. In the eighteenth century in England industry and industrious meant someone who is diligent in his work.

The etymology and the genealogy of the meaning of industry show a much richer meaning of the term that is assumed. Industry is both a reality and a concept that unites different realities, the mystery of faith, the practical use of technique, and human interiority and the body. The modern sense of term was acquired in the eighteenth century and represents an impoverishment of its meaning; it hides its rich history and the connection to the inner reality of mankind. The meaning of industry as know-how began to wane and the sense of operations that produce richness came to the fore. In the language of administration, the term of industry was used only for the domain of manufactures and commerce/trade. Sometimes it means the whole real of economy but agriculture, though there was another meaning for it: making use of immoral/illegal means to attain economic aims. The association with the industrial enterprise as an institution came only with Jean Baptiste Say. Around 1820 manual work has become clearly distinct from industry, which is associated with science and technology. Industry began to be used in the sense of activity.

Industry is a Western phenomenon just as modern technique is. It is the dogmatic infrastructure of Western Europe and has started forming around the thirteenth century, although some may try to argue the seeds can be found earlier. Even someone like John Scotus Eriugena thought that the use of mechanical arts could help mankind restore its condition from before the Fall and to conquer the world¹⁶⁶. Its formation took a long time and was for the most time invisible – it can be called the religion of progress, too. It is a secret mechanism that models the modern world. Pierre Musso names it *industrialization*. It constitutes the dogmatic architecture, spiritual infrastructure of modern society. The term industrial religion is not new. It has been used by different authors (Henri de Saint-Simon), among them being Günther Anders and Erich Fromm. According to the last one, due to this religion mankind becomes the slave of economy and of machinery.

Technical objects cars, tanks, planes, spaceships, mobile phones and so on do not exist just as mere isolated objects, the products of a rational way of existence. They

¹⁶⁴ Pierre Musso, *quoted work*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

¹⁶⁶ David F. Noble, *The Religion of Technology*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, pp. 16–17.

are also embodiments of a phantasmatic structure, a conceptual structure, not only management techniques or ways of employment thereof. Under the guise of the theories of management, this hidden form of spirituality expands and imposes its form of normativity all over the world, including in the minds and hearts of the people. In a sense, the perceived secularization of the West has led to another form of re-enchantment centered around the norm and values born by the new religion. There is no disenchantment, but a new kind of enchantment, the one produced by what Jacques Ellul has called the technical system. The technological development of the world, the development of industry, finance, and economy has led to a new enchanted world, of a transfer of sacrality from one region to another. The techno-science has become sacred – applied science and the production of good on a large scale, a fact underlined by the French thinker Gilbert Simondon. It is a spirituality or religion of efficiency and functionality. This development was made possible by the idea of Incarnation and even by the Papal revolution from the eleventh century. At that point in time a separation between spiritual and political power took place, a separation that the industrial religion wants to close. It is a religion that affect every aspect of social and human life. Just as Christianity has as a center piece the Incarnation of Christ – God assuming the human nature and creation – the new religion has its incarnation: the real existing, enterprises, plants, waterworks. All these are concrete and visible incarnations of the value of efficiency:

“This secular religion was built with patience in the background of the political scene, fighting for its autonomy against the religious sphere. In the silence of the cloisters, in the shadows of the manufactures and behind the smokestacks of industrial plants, this religion developed until it came to light in the triumph moment of the universal Enterprise and Management”¹⁶⁷.

Such systems of beliefs and values organize the existence of human communities. The basic models of social existence that this new religion has to offer are the manufacture, the industrial plant, and the enterprise. It comes also with an article of faith, has normativity and the band that unites the faith and the practical and concrete manifestations of this religion. This is an invisible referent, that plays the role of “divinity”. The belief in this symbolic referent, other beliefs are formed: in progress, in utility, the belief in development, etc. Whatever is accomplished or said in the name of this not-so-new religion is done in the name of this supreme referent and as such it works on the promises it makes. The categories of future and the progress are two important factors in this new spiritual construction, and so are the promises of wealth and happiness. From its practice and successes new precepts and rules for organizing life are drawn, new norms, new technological reasons, new interdictions.

¹⁶⁷ „Cette religion séculière a été patiemment battue dans l’arrière-boutique de la scène politique, combattant pour sa propre autonomie par rapport au religieux. Dans le silence des monastères, dans les pénombres des manufactures et derrière les fumées des usines, cette religion s’est développée jusque à advenir, aujourd’hui, en pleine lumière, à l’heure du triomphe de l’Enterprise et du Management universel.”, in Pierre Musso, *quoted work*, p. 46.

The main thrust of existence goes in the direction of efficiency, of organization, action, productivity, how a healthy and productive life should be led, what mental health is, etc. It has representatives, its own messengers, and its own body. It creates its own images, concepts, rhythms, discourses, even art, its own propaganda, and the effects by which it models human existence without being perceived. In a sense, it is a type of self-idolatry since it pertains to man and to his self-realization without God – which is the idea of self-divinization that can be seen in the Fall from Genesis and Lucifer's Fall. It is a cult of the transformation of nature by using science, technology, rationality, and work.

Due to the efficiency and the results of technique, mankind thinks it can replace God and become the ontological center of existence. Transhumanism is an expression of this underlying belief system born in the Western world. It is a way to thoroughly organizing human existence according to the norms of utilitarian and functional norms of the rule of efficiency. Free time, and leisure as such belongs to this field. It is something that must be organized. For a while, the most representative figure that incarnated the dynamics of the new religion was the engineer, although today that has changed. Leisure must be scientifically managed. The free time must be used pragmatically and efficiently so that the fatigue and the time lost by being tired will be recovered; the individual must come back in the chain of production, must be preoccupied by something, a preoccupation that would make it impossible for him or her to reflect on their condition and to dream about liberty¹⁶⁸.

The same result can be achieved by manipulating and impoverishing language, making it impossible to think otherwise or in opposition to the given reality, as Erich Fromm found out. The day-to-day and the official language makes it impossible to have transcendent meaning, reducing everything to only one dimension – the existing social reality, which is posited as the only one possible. This is made possible by using a kind of ritualized language and making it impossible to access to the past (the cultural legacy of mankind or of a particular culture), or to one's cultural history. One of the main features of the scientific organization of the world as Bertrand Russell describes it, consists in forbidding the access to such things.

Reading Shakespeare would be possible only with government approval – and, to highlight the homogeneity of this future society, there would be only a language spoken in the world. English for example. The cultural heritage, the works of literature, etc. of different people are not going to be translated and made accessible, they will be forbidden. And even in the ruling classes, in the different levels of technocracy, intellectual curiosity will not be encouraged¹⁶⁹.

Erich Fromm called this language magic and operational. The operational misconception of language and thought (reduction of the meaning to a series of operations) is technical, related to the empiricist and neopositivist conception of language, to the idea of banning ambiguity and polysemy out of language – which is utterly impossible. According to Fromm, this operational conception of language

¹⁶⁸ Michel Blay, *Dieu, la nature et l'homme [God, nature and man]*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2013, p. 228.

¹⁶⁹ Russel Bertrand, *The Scientific Outlook*, London, Routledge, pp. 183–186.

focuses on the effort to reduce the meaning of the words to the thing it happens to denote in a certain circumstance. It is an attempt to bind language and meaning to the solely present reality, so no one could think of other possibilities as what is seen or deemed to be the *status quo*. There is only one reality and words adhere to things, but only to a thing as such. That things could be different is a thought should not occur to the speakers.

The new defining figures of the industrial religion are the manager and the social engineer and their latest tool, *cybermanagement*¹⁷⁰. Cybernetics and management are centered around a concept imported from biology, namely organization and information (organization is related to ancient Greek *organon*, meaning instrument), which in Saint-Simon's work got a new meaning, that of network. After WW II, what we call the domain of management was rebuilt around ideas stemming from cybernetics. There is the domain of strategy – wherein the finalities are thought and established, and other domains that pertain to the activities of evaluation, retroaction, of control, of extension of the IT systems, etc.¹⁷¹. They can be seen as being at the core of a tendency called the movement toward a pan-organization, which has engulfed the whole world. It is a form of colonization done using the technological rationality of Western origins.

The extension and regularization of life has become a salient feature of human life these days. Individuals become engulfed in organizations since the moment they are born¹⁷²; school and family have become organization – organization means the conscious activity of cooperation and coordination of different activities and operations. An organization is, thus, an association of peoples who work together to achieve an end¹⁷³. This is an ordering of existence based only on the instrumental rationality. A first expression of this movement toward this technological remodeling of humane existence is to be found in Saint-Simon's and his conviction that a nation must be governed in the same way as a manufacture or as an enterprise/cybernetic machine¹⁷⁴. The whole existence can be seen as a giant workshop/industrial plan¹⁷⁵.

III. THE RELIGION OF ORGANIZATION

This very concept of organization is central to the industrial religions of Henri de Saint-Simon¹⁷⁶, for his science of man and sociology. It stems from biology though (it was not a new concept that got a new meaning in the Macy Conferences).

¹⁷⁰ Pierre Musso, *quoted work*, p. 448.

¹⁷¹ Baptiste Rappin, *quoted work*, 2022, p. 116.

¹⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 32.

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

¹⁷⁴ Pierre Musso, *quoted work*, p. 491.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 632.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 256.

There it marks a revolution. It replaces the visible structure. The predominance of the visible structure in biology has led biologists to teleological conception of life, which now are overcome. A living organism becomes a structure governed by its functions. The organization imposes the order to features, form, or behavior of a plant or animal. Structure, function, and environment are united in the organization of a living being. The organization is supposed to assure the homeostasis of the organism¹⁷⁷. Adaptation to the environment and the feedback loop are the keys to understanding it. To preserve itself, an organism must adapt and learn. The learning process and self-correction are paramount and make possible the adaptation. From there, it becomes a central concept for the new form of the industrial religion, namely cybernetics. An organism maintains its homeostasis by changing information with its surrounding. Life is reduced to the acts of receiving and sending information – communication – properly. Society and man must be treated in this way and a proper management of society entails, according to this view, ordering it along these lines. The older management model of Taylor is now replaced with the cybernetic one. Cybernetics or the cybernetic-inspired governing apparatus can be seen as a tool to fight against the entropy of the world, a tool to rebuild a lost unity. Cybernetics is hunted and informed by the Jewish mysticism of Kabbalah, and it carries such a mystical orientation that aims to achieve *Henosis*¹⁷⁸.

During this process, society and politics are transformed. Politics as such might disappear completely. The idea that politics should become a science of production or something that makes it possible was expressed by Saint-Simon. Politics has changed. Jacques Ellul speaks about the illusion of politics, referring to the fact that the decisions that are made by politicians are seldom truly political decisions. Instead, they are technical ones, taken by experts – technocrats. and this has already become something else: the theory and practice of management, of transforming the existence as such after the image of the enterprise (and, eventually, to fuse all people and individuals in a huge one world government/collective intelligence). Politics must be replaced by science and economics – that is, by a technocracy that will take command of society. In this sense, if such a thing will come to pass, there will be no room for freedom and for debating (science is supposed to be the spiritual power, while industry the temporal one; nevertheless, the practical power is the one that leads the spiritual one, since everything is done in the sense of acquiring power).

This new religion was a new Christianity, according to its apostle Saint-Simon. It put to work the divine power present in mankind. In the new ordering of society, the spiritual and temporal powers are to become one and mold the whole existence, social and individual. This is why Pierre Musso speaks of the closure of the *Schize*, of the distinction of the two power that happened in the eleventh century in the Papal

¹⁷⁷ Baptiste Rappin, *Les origines cybernétiques du management contemporain [The cybernetic origins of contemporary management]*, Nice, Ovadia Publishing House, 2022, pp. 15–16.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 125–127.

Revolution. It is another way of affirming the totalitarian thrust of the industrial religion, its expansion in all areas of life. Technique changes man, even ancient technique not only the modern one.

The invention of such a thing as the heavy plow in the twelfth century has led to kind of mini-revolution, to the reorganization of agriculture, and even to the apparition of the attitude proper to modernity that nature is something to be exploited. It changed the way property was considered, how the land was distributed, and how communities should be organized and run. This was the consequence of adopting a plow that was far more productive and that required eight or ten pairs of oxen, necessitating the cooperation of more families. Before the invention of this plow and its expansion in agriculture families produced what was necessary for their consumption. As a result of the transformation of this main working instrument, productivity increased, and agriculture began to be an activity oriented toward more production and exploitation.

IV. CONCLUSION

The new religion is a religion of efficiency, and it finds its most adequate expression in the science of efficiency, that is cybernetic – the core of managerial sciences (utility justifies everything). The existence of society and of man is thus transformed to become an organization, a form of order that search for efficiency, based on the idea of the feedback loop. An organization can exist only if it adapts permanently to the challenges of the environment, and, by virtue of the transformation of the whole society into an organization, society ceases to be a place wherein individual can exercise their creativity, capacity of judgment, becoming one that imposes the self-correction of behavior based upon some objectives determined by the technocratic class.

Man, and society become self-regulating mechanisms. It is a huge step toward the realization of the dream of a scientific governing of mankind, an automatic process that eliminates debating, discussion, and judgement. Decision-making and the rest of the mental operations/activities undergo a process of standardization, they should become codes, programs, automatic sequences (the efficiency of the action is the aim of this process). This development birthed the idea of a planetary governing machine, which would govern every decision of the people on Earth. It is a new form of alienation and oppression, a governing by numbers. The invention of the computer, the apparition of the personal computers, and the internet is also an essential condition for building up this new totalitarian nightmare, since the network makes possible the unification and integration of all aspect of life, including a total surveillance.

This scientific organization of life does not tolerate difference or different cultures. The only way to act allowed would be the one based on the norms of technological rationality and efficiency, whereby free choice and a free decision

would be made impossible. The individual is just a part of the machine. Politics disappears. This is one possible meaning of the expression the “world becoming of organization”. One of the main thrusts of this is the domestication of man, make him docile¹⁷⁹, and to fusion of all individuals in a giant collective intelligence. Annihilating national (and personal) sovereignty is an integral and necessary part of this process¹⁸⁰. The sciences of organization and management are a new expression of the industrial religion. And their aim is well-described by Baptiste Rappin:

“The management sciences aim to achieve the complete domestication of mankind using social engineering, which is conceived of a cybernetic mode of intervention, directly or indirectly, in the organization of life”¹⁸¹.

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¹⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 44 and p. 84.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 91.

¹⁸¹ “Les sciences de gestion visent à la domestication intégrale de l'être humain en usant de L'INGINERIE SOCIALE, conçue comme mode, direct ou indirecte, d'intervention cybernétique dans les organisation.”, in Baptiste Rappin, *quoted work*, 2014, p. 130.