

# RELIGION AND ECONOMY AS UNIVERSALIST CULTURES<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

I have been wrestling with the core idea behind this article ever since, while preparing for a colloquium, I read an article by an economist who claimed that “economics is a theology”, and added that Marx, Hayek and Keynes were “the most influential theologians of the twentieth century”. By comparing the expansion of the great universalist monotheisms with that of the modern market economy, I slowly realised that the parallelism between religion and economy is more than an idle exercise in analogy. Through the universalistic expansionism that drives them, and the language with which they invade and describe the world, they both permeate our lives and serve as the somatic infrastructure of the societies they have conquered. It is no accident that the problem of poverty and its theological value has generated schisms within the Catholic Church. This is an atavistic question and should come as no surprise, because poverty is related to both economics and theology.

## KEYWORDS

Economics; poverty; market, religion

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## RESUMO

A ideia deste artigo persegue-me desde o momento em que, preparando um colóquio, li, num artigo de um economista, que “a economia é uma teologia”; especificava ele, ainda, que Marx, Hayek e Keynes foram “os teólogos mais influentes do século XX”. Aos poucos, comparando a expansão dos grandes monoteísmos universalistas com a da moderna economia de mercado, apercebi-me de que o paralelismo entre religião e economia é mais do que um ocioso exercício de analogia. No expansionismo universalista que os alimenta, na linguagem com que invadem e descrevem o mundo, ambas impregnam as nossas vidas e tornam-se a infraestrutura somática das sociedades que conquistaram. Não por acaso, o problema da pobreza e do seu valor teológico tem gerado cismas na Igreja Católica. É coisa atávica e não nos deveria surpreender, pois a pobreza é, a um tempo, economia e teologia.

## PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Economia; mercado; pobreza; religião

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To be is everything that a  
Capitalist would like to possess  
(Afonso Cruz, *Enciclopédia da História Universal* [Encyclopaedia of World History])

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<sup>1</sup> This article is the development of a speech made at the 9th Congress of the Portuguese Sociological Association (Faro, July / 2016), which was published in the respective Minutes (Costa, in press).

I. Some time ago, I was invited to attend a colloquium on religion. I accepted and, without knowing why, was placed in a panel addressing the relations between the *global* and the *local*. I confess that the first meaning that occurs to me when I hear the word “globalisation” is economic; only afterwards do I think about religion and other issues (culture, etc.). This was the initial genesis of this article, fruit of the embarrassment that I experienced at that time.

Manuela Silva, a Catholic economist, sees things from the opposite perspective. “first and foremost, [globalisation] evokes a desire for unity and communication among all peoples, embracing the entirety of our planet, and recalls expressions such as the universality of human destiny, or construction of the universal human family. In this sense, it deserves to be embraced from the perspective of Christian faith which, following the teachings of Jesus Christ, opens paths of fraternity and communion with all creation” (Silva, 2006, p. 28).

Only after this initial observation does Manuela Silva refer to the economic significance of globalisation, viewed as “a state of evolution of the economy”: a deregulated world market that erases geographical boundaries, production and consumption processes, also conceived at a global scale, accelerated circulation of material and informational resources, unprecedented marketing, rising importance of financial transactions vis-à-vis transactions of goods and services (called the “real economy”). All this, she says, has been transformed by “dominant economic thinking” into a paradigm that foresees no alternatives and underestimates its own dysfunctions and victims (Silva, 2006, pp. 29-30).

Another Catholic economist, Américo Mendes, views economic globalisation from a similar perspective: “worldwide expansion of the predominance of the market economy” (which has an “expansionist nature” in its own right), with a progressive increase of financial aspects over the real economy<sup>2</sup>. Providing an overview of expansionism of the *market relation* and its effects, he uses a religious image – it either reveals the divine plan of Eden or “potentially infernal shadows” (Mendes, 2005, pp. 89, 104-105; 2006, pp. 39-45).

Perhaps we should not be surprised by this verbal crossfire between religion and economics, which may be viewed as more than a mere rhetorical device.

Christian Arnsperger, also an economist, entitles a section of one of his articles as follows: “Economics is a theology”. In his opinion, “economics is profoundly religious”, not institutionally, but anthropologically, either due to the fact that it *relinks* people (wherein the word *religion* comes from the Latin, *religare*, to reconnect), or from mankind’s urge to free ourselves from the “absurd matter that binds us to death”, through genuine scarcity (rather than imaginary scarcity – which is sometimes opulently imaginary – invented by capitalism). Economic thinking receives its original impulse from the Eden of abundance and suggests that mankind’s salvation is possible: to overcome poverty, misery and death. In his opinion, Marx, Hayek, and Keynes were literally “the most influential theologians of the twentieth century”. Of course, in terms of theology, a host of heresies and heretics soon blossomed (Arnsperger, 2012, pp. 40-42).

<sup>2</sup> For Américo Mendes, globalisation also involves expansion of democracy and human rights (2005, pp. 89, 98-99).

II. Looking at the two major world religions, we see them as universalist in nature and expansionist over the course of history. The impulse of the universal fraternity of Christ was released on the map of Antiquity, animated by the *discourse of inclusion* of Paul the Apostle: “there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

By freeing them from Jewish dictates, Paul made it possible for Gentiles to convert to Christianity without having to become Jews. Hans Küng suggests that this paved the way towards enabling the creed of a small Jewish sect to become a universal religion, which united East and West (Küng, 2007, p. 129). But this process took time, involving multiple communities, theologies and controversies. Constantine, afraid that religious diversity would undermine political unity, convoked the Council of Nicaea (325 AD), and then converted the Council’s decisions into imperial laws, and aligned the ecclesiastical provinces with imperial provinces. Theodosius the Great (392 AD) made Christianity a state religion and heresy a state crime. About this time, Priscillian and his companions were beheaded – “for the first time, Christians kill Christians because of differences in faith. Despite voices of protest, people quickly became accustomed to this” (Küng, 2007, p. 198). Native paganism progressively faded from public life and the title of high priest (*Pontifex Maximus*), formerly an imperial title, was now used to describe the Bishop of Rome. Anti-Judaism was incorporated into Christianity. When the Roman Empire fell apart this didn’t leave a void (Vaneigem, 1995, p. 77).

To a certain extent, Christianisation led to expansion of the Church, to such an extent that several authors already viewed it as a global corporation many centuries ago, or perhaps better, in view of its subsequent evolution, as an integral element behind the formation of colonial empires – a European institution that was transplanted to other continents (Berger, 2014, pp. 22-23; Furseth & Repstad, 2006, p. 81).

Along the way, a universal Christian (and/or Catholic) identity was fabricated, in the form of doctrinal unity, which led to many ideas being classified as heresies. From this point of view, the building itself wasn’t very solid. A religion, writes Bourdieu, is, in fact, multiple religions, “under the cover of a minimum of common dogmas and rites”, while a dogma is actually multiple dogmas, by means of the multiple (re)interpretations via which it is received (Bourdieu, 1987, pp. 51-53). This model has its virtues and constraints. While, on the one hand, it has conveyed a single figure of the universal Christian, on the other hand, it has hindered this progress. One of the most important setbacks to Christian expansion occurred in China at the beginning of the eighteenth century, as a result of Pope Clement XI’s edict that prohibited Chinese converts from incorporating rites, spirituality and ethics from their culture into Christianity, such as veneration of ancestors and Confucius. Traditional names used in China to refer to God or to heaven, were also banished from the local Catholic praxis, under the threat of excommunication. Imperial China was quick to respond by means of “expulsion of missionaries, prohibition of Christianity, destruction of churches, and forced abjuration of the Christian faith”, in the words of Hans Kung, who suggests that since in China veneration of ancestors was the basis of the social bond, and Confucian ethics guided the overall value system,

anyone who wanted to become a Christian would effectively have to cease being Chinese (Kung, 2007, p. 687). In other words, this prohibition went against Paul's discourse of inclusion. From a broader perspective, it was this *normative Christian* who guided the missionary-based activity of modern European colonialism. In this context, conversion to Christianity was much more than a mere change of religion. Instead it involved conversion to European culture, inclusively in terms of questions such as the architecture of the missions (Forbes, 1998, p. 121-122).

However, given that the world had changed, dramatically, Catholic theology harboured a neologism in the 1970s: "inculturation". This was no longer a question of translating a Eurocentric theology into local languages (a theology of adaptation), but instead of going further, and accepting local cultures as a source of theological (and pastoral) inspiration or, even, of new creation. Ultimately, some would argue, this was nothing novel in the history of Christianity, which has always been subject to various inculturations since its origin, starting with Hellenisation in the first centuries of its existence. In any case, theologies of inculturation have generated a sense of mutual distrust. From the perspective of the Vatican, it was feared that this process, if left untrammelled, would lead to mere syncretisms. On the other hand, (many people in Asia, Africa, Latin America), feared that inculturation was a new missionary strategy of domination, which led to the formation of another neologism: "interculturalism", inserted in what seemed to be a spirit of interreligious dialogue (Teixeira, 2002).

With various disputes, of more or less an interpretive nature, the universal Church of *homo catholicus* ended up by embracing the theologies of inculturation. It did so because life is local, believers are local, cultures continue to have local roots. In other words: doctrine may be extra-territorial, but people are territorial.

This impulse, we might say, of progressist correction, also carries within it the fundamental oscillatory tension from which it was born. Christian Arnsperger recently stated this exact idea: the most progressive Christian circles seek to attain the universal as the ultimate goal of Christianity, in a pluralistic and democratic world, but it is feared that this will lead to dissolution of Christian identity "in a laicised haze" (Arnsperger, 2012, p. 38).

III. The Islamic trajectory towards universalism differed significantly from the Christian route, from the outset. "The Founder of Islam was his own Constantine", and founded his own state and empire. As head of state, "he governed a place and a people, dispensed justice, collected taxes, commanded armies, waged war and made peace." There is no dichotomy between *regnum* and *sacerdotium* (Lewis, 2006, p. 31).

Moreover, Muslim expansion was unparalleled given the astonishing speed with which it conquered new territories. In the space of a few decades, along the routes of armies and merchants, the map of the Mediterranean and Asia became unrecognisable, as civilisations such as those of Egypt and Persia were conquered. Within less than a century after the death of the Prophet, an Arab empire extended from India to the Iberian Peninsula. It seemed that Christianity had been challenged at a world scale (Küng, 2010,

pp. 267-269)<sup>3</sup>. Over the following centuries, the zealous expansion continued, with advances and retreats in different parts of Asia and Europe.

There is a third specific aspect of the affirmation of Islam as a great world religion: the momentum behind the first Arab conquests was more expansionist than universalist. The goal behind the military campaigns was to promote Arabisation, in political terms, rather than Islamisation, in religious terms. As a result, there were no mass forced conversions in the territories that were subjected to new political sovereignty. At the time, “Islam was understood primarily as an Arab religion, a religion for Arabs, and so it was to remain” (Küng, 2010, p. 218). The conquered populations – whether Christians or Jews – were left in peace and segregation. Because of this condition, they were required to pay a special tax to the new sovereigns. This led Küng (2010, p. 218) to assert that “conversions were not wanted; (...) they meant loss of taxation” in addition to leading to “demands for the same financial privileges”. Non-Muslims rarely had access to high civilian positions (they did not do military service), they were “second class citizens”, generally with freedom of religion<sup>4</sup>. They were often the majority or even the large majority of the population in the invaded territories.

It was during the period of Abbasid rule, well into the second century of the Islamic era, that Arabisation gave way to universal Islamisation. The new demographics were reflected in the army: Turks, Khorasanis and Persians became more numerous and rose to the top of the military and administrative hierarchy. This corresponded to the equality between all believers that had been envisaged by the Prophet. In Persia, Zoroastrianism almost completely disappeared. In the Maghreb region, Christianity followed the same fate, although significant niches persisted. In the ensuing centuries, both in Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, it was this universalist model that prevailed in Islam.

It is curious that the process of de-Arabisation of the political and military spheres and of the social status of believers wasn't accompanied by a corresponding de-Arabisation of religious, and even cultural, identity. Indeed Egypt Arabised itself – Arabic became the *lingua franca* even of the Christians of the Near East (and often also became the *lingua franca* of their liturgy) (Küng, 2010, pp. 293-296).

The converts adopted Arabic names. The great schism between Sunni and Shia dates from Arab history, concerning the succession to Muhammad. Both sides consider that Arabic is the language of the Qur'an. The tradition (*Sunnah*) is Arabic. To a certain extent, this process emulated, *mutatis mutandis*, the Christian trajectory: an Arab institution was transplanted to other corners of the world and a universal Muslim identity was fabricated. As with Christianity, it was often necessary to force this identity. The first caliph, Abu Bakr, soon realised that faith alone was not enough. He required military force to overcome the wave of apostasy that emerged in several Arab tribes following the death

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<sup>3</sup> As with Jesus Christ, Mohammed's contributions to history involved no material aspect (knowledge or technology). This, in part, explains the limitations of materialistic explanations for the period of Arab-Islamic expansion. Looking for a better explanation, Bertrand Russell spoke about “fanaticism” (1990, p. 97), Hans Küng referred to “religious motivation” (2010, pp. 212-213). I think they both essentially mean the same thing.

<sup>4</sup> These conditions were, in principle, applied to Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. The situation of the “polytheists” was quite different, and far worse. Tolerance for almost all citizens effectively disappeared in the Arabian Peninsula – the “Muslim land” (Küng, 2010, pp. 216-219).

of Muhammad. His political-military strategy motivated plundering in Syria, Iraq and Persia. It was also at this early time that Muslim armies fought each other for the first time. Moreover, sectarian violence soon manifested itself. War broke out between the various factions, which led to the assassination of several caliphs, that weren't limited to palatial coups, and often involved widespread carnage. For example, the Kharijite secessionists were massacred by Ali, who was in turn assassinated by them in 661 (Küng, 2010, pp. 208, 229, 230). Arab polytheisms were eradicated.

Whereas mysticism generated mistrust in the Christian world, the same was true of Islam. From the eighth century onwards, Sufism gained increasing prominence in the Muslim world, at an intercontinental level and in the tenth and subsequent centuries, several prominent Sufis were executed (Küng, 2010, pp. 383-393).

The Qur'an lies at the heart of Muslim universal identity – the very Word of Allah transmitted directly in Arabic to Muhammad, who reproduced it, *ipsis verbis*, to the scribes. Critical examination of the text reveals various Christian and Hebrew sources, with several etymologies. In other words, it is “the fruit of a collective work” (Costa, 2007, p. 297; Gilliot, 2006). The most astonishing aspect isn't this relatively trivial conclusion, but rather the speed with which Islam established the definitive version of the Qur'an. As was inevitable, there were discrepancies between the various records, which undermined the perfection of the Revelation and disunited the community of believers. A quarter of a century after the Prophet's death, the canon of the Qur'an was established and, as a consequence, other versions were considered to be apocryphal and were ordered to be destroyed by the third caliph, Othman, although they continued to circulate furtively, perhaps until the tenth century. It was only after the invention of the printing press that it was possible to ensure rigorous reproductions of the Qur'an (the 1923 Cairo text is considered to be the definitive version)<sup>5</sup>. Notwithstanding other kinds of dissension, the Canonical Qur'an is undisputed among Muslims (Alili, 2006; Costa, 2007, pp. 297-298; Gilliot, 2006).

In the history of the great religions, it is fascinating to see how diametrically opposed movements fuel one another – centripetal or centrifugal, unifying or diversifying, repressive or resistance-based. We return to Bourdieu's thesis, that a single religion actually encompasses many religions, and the idea that a rather unstable edifice has been built. The relationship with the *Sunnah* divides Sunnis and Shiites, the dietary rules have become territorial, as has the rule on fasting, Ramadan is adapted locally or eliminated, prayers follow different rules (inculturation does not seem to have been a mere option). Dozens of minorities have emerged within Islam, which have often accused other groups of being heretical.

At a political level, the edifice of Islam also had weak points, under the facade of the Caliphate and Islam. Caliphs existed from 632 to 1924, with various different statutes. Islamist regimes have been implanted after two to three decades of secular regimes, if not laicist regimes, of both a left-wing and right-wing orientation, in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia,

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<sup>5</sup> I leave aside the controversial question of the abrogated verses, as well as the satanic verses (concerning the 53rd surah), which would perhaps merit a separate section because of their complexity (which I don't completely master).

Turkey, and Iran (Costa, 2012). Even the intuitive idea, which is by no means outrageous, that secularism is foreign to Muslim political culture, deserves due attention. In the opinion of John Gray, Turkish political culture, at least until very recently, was more secular than that of the United States<sup>6</sup>. If there is a tradition of one kind of a regime in Saudi Arabia, there is another, very different, tradition in Indonesia.

However, our daily existence is subject to the violent incursion of fundamentalist universalism, that wants to disassociate itself from any culture and impose a unified code of conduct, that should be applied in the Netherlands, Afghanistan, everywhere, using Olivier Roy's description of the Talibans in Afghanistan<sup>7</sup>.

On this question, both Hans Küng and John Gray distinguish Judaism from Christianity and Islam. Since 135 AD, Judaism has abandoned any universalist pretensions, and has only recently been able once again to conduct politics and war on the basis of a religious (albeit ethnic) orientation. By contrast, Christianity and Islamism have practically cultivated an "aggressive universal pretension" (Küng, 2007, p. 356) or a "militant universalism" (Gray, 2004, p. 122) that quickly led to a missionary "ideology of war" that should persist until "the victory of the respective religion throughout the world as a final goal" (Küng, 2007, p. 356). Universal salvation for everyone; the one and only true salvation.

This thesis seems to have some foundation<sup>8</sup>. Many Islamic fundamentalist leaders behave as Olivier Roy describes them. Although they may seem anti-cosmopolitan, they have become global players involved in global debates. Many of their religious organisations are multinational, which leads them, sooner or later, to create tensions with various national governments. Against or in favour of globalisation, religions gain public influence everywhere.

Roland Robertson's thesis does not sound too far-fetched: what the world system does is less economy and more culture – national cultures with their encounters and mismatches, their identities, their religions (Furseth & Repstad, 2006, pp. 80-81). In the middle of this crucible, we encounter both fundamentalist rages and global and local interfaith initiatives.

**IV.** Like great religion, great economics is also universalist and expansionist. For Américo Mendes, this is economic globalisation: "the worldwide expansion of the predominance of the market economy over other forms of economic organisation. (...) this predominance is explained by the 'expansionist nature of the market relationship'" (Mendes, 2006, p. 39). As it progresses, the conquest leaves marks on the territory. The new economy dismantles many local economies that have been governed by other rules, without giving them sufficient resources to survive in the market (Silva, 2006, p.

<sup>6</sup> It is worth transcribing the following passage: "America's characteristic religiosity is becoming increasingly striking. It has the fundamentalist movement, which is by far the most powerful of all developed countries. There is no other country, which is in any way comparable, in which invoke the name of Jesus politicians so often. In no other country is there a movement to ban Darwinism from public schools. In fact, the United States is a less secular regime than Turkey" (Gray, 2004, p. 38).

<sup>7</sup> Interview in the *Público* newspaper, 2010, March 6.

<sup>8</sup> Being prudent, this doesn't lead to an identification between aggressive fundamentalism and (universalist) monotheism. Hinduism has its own form of violent fundamentalism. Confucianism also exhibits disturbing signs (Küng, 2007, pp. 646-647; the international press occasionally communicates such signs to us).

32). Dependent upon dismantling of obstacles that might impede its implementation, it is driven by the new information technologies, which are also expansionist, in a manner that stimulates dissemination of knowledge, the flow of capital, specialisation, the complementarity of production and distribution chains across countries, with increased production and consumption. This thus dismantlement process not only affects pre-industrial economies. Even economies with industrial experience, in the clash with the large capitalist expansion industry, have suffered from de-industrialisation processes, some of which took place as early as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries<sup>9</sup>.

It was not long before another fundamentalist universalism entered boldly into everyday life, to impose a unified code of conduct, applicable everywhere, from the Netherlands to Afghanistan: to produce, exchange, consume, distribute, redistribute, always in the same manner. Using the new invasive vocabulary this means managing the world without discriminating against anything or anyone, unless someone refuses to accept the unified code of conduct. The code is indeed universalist, but it excludes any other alternatives. It's not inclusive, because it's the one and only true possibility. With its essentially egalitarian outlook, this universalism has been permeating the environment of our leading business corporations, and from there has spread to others, evident in corporate mission statements, codes of good practices, etc. There are no longer distinct categories of man and woman, Jews and Gentiles, blacks and whites, because all employees and all consumers are equal to us, and we all serve equally. This seems like the Christian equality invoked by Hannah Arendt: equality of souls, indifferent to slavery for centuries (1996, p. 143)<sup>10</sup>.

Robert Heilbroner and William Milberg, both of whom are economists, seem to have discovered the Egg of Columbus. We leaf through entire economics journals and rarely find a reference to the capitalist (and class) nature of the economies that are studied therein. It is as if this were inconceivable – since there is only one economy. However, if Medieval History magazines were to never use the word feudalism, this omission would be ostentatious. Modern economists have this taboo, which has become the “best kept secret of the profession” (the link between this school of economics and capitalism). This secret is so well guarded that many economists don't even know about it (Heilbroner & Milberg, 1998, pp. 20, 145-146, 149). Those who know about it and put a name on it are classified as stubborn, recalcitrant persons, i.e. without places in the seminars where economic science is taught<sup>11</sup>. The very word neoliberalism is avoided because it is “reductionist” and malicious; why use another word to name reality?

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<sup>9</sup> In relation to India, see Clingingsmith and Williamson, 2005; in order to explain Indian deindustrialisation, the authors also consider internal political factors in India, which at the time was under the rule of the British East India Company.

<sup>10</sup> That is why this creed, unlike so many others, has no problem defending human rights and non-discrimination: in fact, it has little to oppose them.

<sup>11</sup> The new inquisition is portrayed by Laura Raim in “Police de la pensée économique à l'Université” (Policing of Economic Thought at the University) (2015). Succinctly, the university, throughout the world (France, England, the USA, Australia), eliminates everything that is not neoclassical in economics professors and researchers. Disciplines or modules of History of Economic Thought are vanishing. Top-rated economic journals reject heterodox articles and even recommend their authors to try to publish in sociology journals (I suspect they soon won't even be able to do that). From the primacy of theology we have evolved to the primacy of economics, I mean, of that school of economics.



An imperial culture has been formed, “a culture that engenders the organisms and personalities it needs”. We have become “capitalist beings,” in the words of Arnsperger, another economist (2012, p. 58). We are beings who are immersed in a “common sense” capitalist that shapes the daily discourse of people or institutions, of the rulers and ruled, invoking the “reality” of true human nature (Carvalho & Rodrigues, 2006, p. 344). Alan Wolfe speaks about an invasive “market ethos”, that is attractive not only in the economic sphere but also in the social and moral sphere. Rodney Dobell views this as a kind of legitimizing religion – of a status quo that we would otherwise think was blatantly unfair (Haddorf, 2000, p. 488, 491).

Some have interpreted the end of Christianity as the overthrow of “infrastructural religion”; When Christian faith ceased to be the main “productive force” of the economic order, we entered into secular modernity, whose superstructure has also absorbed private religions. This thesis is by no means comical and, in its verisimilitude, has been updated. The production and control of subjectivity as the somatic support of the economy now involves the entire constellation of the market – from commodity to consumption, without forgetting either credit or desire. Fredric Jameson views this as the worst form of commodity fetishisation, as theorised by Marx: consumption “has become completely spiritual”, “materiality is now a mere pretext for the exercise of new mental pleasures”. Purchase of goods quickly becomes volatile – we can go shopping without buying anything, go shopping without spending any money, as long as we’re engaged in the right performance. What does this leave us with? The Apocalypse as an alternative. Jameson recalls someone who said it was easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism<sup>12</sup>. That’s very similar to a profession of faith.

Elsewhere I have provided examples from the news media which illustrate that the market model has reached a transcendent or, perhaps, metaphysical, status - as the foundation of public policies and ethical decisions. Road safety, drug use, euthanasia, immigration, abortion, etc., are – and why not?! – areas whose political-legal frameworks cannot escape the inescapable scrutiny of unabashed economic / financial cost / benefit analysis (Costa, 2014).

Dembinski (another economist) concludes that markets are “the only mode of social regulation”, the “foundation of the social bond”, the “normative dimension (...) of behaviour” (Dembinski, 2009b, pp. 312-313, 324). Moreover, markets have reified themselves to such an extent that they are the source and subject of law, guiding deregulatory legislation, claiming rights, litigating for the reparation of damages caused by third parties that disrespect the dogmas of free trade defined by the World Trade Organisation (Branco, 2012, pp. 31-32).

Christianity had its own distinctive language. We recognize it when we visit an ancient art museum or when we read literature from the same historical periods. We are impressed how the use of religious language was impregnated within sacred motifs and,

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<sup>12</sup> The idea of “infrastructural religion” is found in Gauchet (1997, p. 236); The “mercantile subjectivity”, in Lazzarato (2013, p. 49). Jameson’s reflections on the spirituality of consumption and the end of capitalism, are found in Jameson, 2010, pp. 195-199.

also profane motifs, in such a manner that would make them persuasive. This is what Michel Zink calls “Christian impregnation”, an omnipresent atmosphere that has led modern philologists to try to extract excerpts from medieval texts that escape them. This attitude is to a certain extent anachronistic, because it is very modern (Zink, 2003, pp. 1-5).

The capitalist being also has its own language, saturated with impregnation of the market economy, in both its lexicon and rhetorical resources. It is a language that describes a world, and its roles and legitimation. Everyone is familiar with it: the customer, consumer, taxpayer, shareholder, cost, revenue, creditors, company, entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, business, business model, remuneration, growth, efficiency, investment, success, sustainability, innovation, value chain, value added, merit, market, risk, management, brand, quality and product.

Analogies have been updated. The analogies of Christendom have fallen into obsolescence. We no longer compare the earthly order with the divine, the princely court with the heavenly court. The three-part division between *oratores/bellatores/laboratores* (those who pray, fight and work) has been broken because all of these categories are (*co*) *laboratores* (collaborators). Millionaires display the number of hours they work every day, for example one amongst all the (*co*) *laboratores*. A new headstone epitaph has been created: “he worked until his last day with enthusiasm”. The less work there is, the more it disciplines our minds, in a renewal of the obligatory labour regime; Even if you cannot work, you have to practise. Like consumption, work “has become completely spiritual”. We must be workers even without the materiality of the workplace, since we are engaged in the right performance: to reproduce the gestures of work, day after day, to carry out ongoing professional training, to enter and leave workplaces that are proven to be in search of work, to conduct individual interviews that reinforce our loyalty to the work regime (inclusively in terms of our private lives, which are open to inspection-related questions). From ordeal to ordeal, the practising worker may receive an oblation to continue his pilgrim’s journey, without rest.

In modern stylistic flourishes, the state is described as a company, whose shareholders are taxpayers and which intervenes in the market, in competition with other companies – private or public, some of which are other member states. The market has penetrated the state, and the state has penetrated the market. Hermínio Martins announces the birth of a true state market. Large companies already choose in which States they want to set up their headquarters<sup>13</sup>. States compete with each other, lowering their taxes to attract large clients. Millionaires choose “the best state offer in the international market” where they will register themselves as taxpayers and even as citizens (Martins, 2012, pp. 34-35). Relapsed states, recidivist in their heterodoxy, are relegated to a pariah status, with consequent reprisals.

The university has also been updated. It has discarded Kantian (reason) and Humboldtian (culture) traps and now embraces excellence (Readings, 2003). The university’s designations have discarded the old hagiography: institutes, centres, amphitheatres are now adopting names of companies and entrepreneurs. A sign of a good reputation now

<sup>13</sup> They are often very small installations.

requires that a person belongs to a university governing body – as an adviser, curator, or in another capacity<sup>14</sup>. Courses, departments, etc., that have no clients are forced to close; Viable endeavours have to carry out benchmarking exercises. The campus must be a nest of companies. Public universities are entering the state business sector (as foundations or with another status – that’s of little concern). Interviews with university deans are equivalent to interviews with CEOs. Moisés de Lemos Martins goes into more detail of this process: Directors of Schools or Faculties are now seen as “commercial directors” engaged in administering “accelerated mobilisation of teachers and students for the market and for ranking”, subject to procedural / technological control mechanisms of quality assurance, which are merely “corrective and orthopaedic procedures”, of both teaching and research (Martins, 2015, pp. 407- 408, 412, 414). Unbelievers can’t escape the liturgies and litanies of this creed.

The spontaneous vocabulary of everyday life endows us with the ontological verisimilitude in which we live: there is a market for everything, and everything is a market. Markets can be financial, labour, religious, artistic, etc.. Credit, affection, mourning, marriage, etc. are all managed. The verb “to negotiate” is omnipresent.

Some words are migrating towards others. Doreen Massey has followed the trail left by several terms. Patients, readers, students are all now renamed “clients”. She says that, with each such migration, a relationship that we saw in one way, with all its connotations, “is erased by a general relationship of buying and selling that is given precedence over it” (Macey, 2013, p.3). Several roles are replaced by a single role, tailored to what Jung Mo Sung calls “store treatment” (Sung, 2006, p. 83). Dembinski argues that greed has been rehabilitated in the contemporary moral discourse, under a single maxim: “there is no such thing as a free lunch”. An ambiguous mixture of positive law and normative exhortation has reached the status of a political recommendation (2009b, p. 328; 2009a, p. 89). Public managers seem to like it.

In terms of moral education, there are schools in the UK that teach young children about the uplifting lives of successful entrepreneurs. Some of these schools are religious and “very fashionable (...) even amongst irreligious families”. The idea is to make the enterprise curriculum an obligatory discipline (Martins, 2012, pp. 20-25). In Portugal, similar teaching practises have already emerged, in terms of teaching experiences of financial literacy and entrepreneurship in the compulsory schooling system. This idea has its proselytes, because “illiteracy” is execrable. But we don’t know when this will be mandatory in school curricula for all pupils. In any case, these subjects have already been taught in more than 400 public schools in 2015, to children and young people from the age of seven onwards, promoted by Junior Achievement Portugal (a joint initiative involving Sonae, Grupo Mello, Citibank, among others). In an ambitious initiative, entrepreneurship version for infants has been taught to babies aged between four and eighteen months in an institute in Lisbon<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Ricardo Espírito Santo Silva Salgado was a member of the Board of Trustees of the University of Aveiro, as verified in the *Diário da República*, 2nd series, nº 199 of October 14, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> *Público*, 2015, April 7; Soeiro, 2015. In my primary and middle school education, during the era of Salazar and Marcello

And we have a cosmogony: “there has always been a market”. This cosmogony is not entirely mythical. In fact, since there is a division of labour and cities, this has imposed the need to live in an environment of domestic and foreign trade. Peasant self-sufficiency is a prehistory of the true human vocation, revealed in the course of the civilisational process, moving in the right direction, but sometimes with setbacks.

In the case of the West, the urban-mercantile revolution, initiated in around the fourteenth century, heralded modern bourgeois civilisation. The self-celebration of the new order stigmatised the preceding “dark ages”. The Church, at the dawn of this new era, as Raoul Vaneigem reminds us, had to adjust to the unleashing of free-enterprise capitalism, incompatible with the conservatism of the agrarian economy. The “great landowner,” “expensive and unproductive,” did not serve “the faith of the entrepreneur, artisan, banker, industrialist,” based on “dynamism, profitability, parsimony, and inventive spirit” (Vaneigem, 1995, p. 106, 137). It adjusted as best it could, i.e. with slowness and internal resistance. The Reformation had finally arrived.<sup>16</sup>

The increasingly monetised new market economy is reflected in the religious movements that have emerged therein. Its habitat is the city. Even religious orders, such as the Franciscans and Dominicans, which at first were distrustful of urban centres, have ended up by going there. The poverty they cultivate is no longer that of the hermit. The poor who strive to serve are not the traditional poor: the unemployed, those devastated by the war, peasants fleeing from serfdom who fall into vagabondage. The new poor are modern people who work, precarious artisans who are not represented by any guild, underpaid construction workers, day labourers. The civil authorities of the new bourgeois order soon took measures to prevent rising wage costs (which commenced in the mid-fourteenth century – in Aragon, England, France), to subject the idle to compulsory labour, to forbid hospitality to the number of vagabonds who were growing every day in conjunction with popular uprisings. As all transactions now tend to be monetarised, alms have followed this trend (Boccardo, 2014, pp. 233-236; Fiore, 2014, pp. 219, 220).

Merchants have gained a religious prominence. Some are raised to the altar, while others are declared to be heretical. Omobono of Cremona was the first proto-modern merchant to be declared a saint, in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, another merchant – Peter Waldo – used the precept specified in the Gospel of Matthew (19, 21: “Go, sell what you have, give money to the poor and you will have a treasure in Heaven”) to found the heretical Waldensians, who espoused voluntary poverty, and fuelled many fires throughout Europe beyond their homeland (Fiore, 2014, p. 221-222, Vaneigem 1995, p. 112-113). This was the spirit of the age. Francis of Assisi, the son of a rich merchant,

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Caetano, there were also missionaries who visited schools; I remember one who moved me and made me write a biography of S. Domingos Sávio and S. João Bosco as edifying figures.

<sup>16</sup> In general terms, this is the Weberian thesis, which Michael Novak disagrees with, not so much in terms of reformist ideas in general (which he does not interpret in exactly the same manner as Weber) but because of what he considers to be a bias in relation to “Calvinism” and the (absence of a) Catholic contribution to capitalism (Novak, 2001). In a text that remained unpublished until 1940, Marx established the ascetic connection of capitalism (Löwy, 1995, p. 43). But in “Capital” itself a sketch of this idea was already outlined in a footnote referring to the “transformation of almost all the traditional saint feast days into working days” (Marx, 1990, p. 314).

revolted against his father and founded an order based on voluntary poverty, this time with the blessing of Pope Innocent III. It wasn't long before the Franciscans experienced a schism between moderates, known as "conventuais", and "spiritual" Franciscans – who assumed a radical or intransigent option to live in poverty (Fiore, 2014, pp. 221-222; Vaneigem, 1995, p. 113). The 13<sup>th</sup> century was filled with radical pauperists as was the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Everything was encountered: inspired prophets, armed bands, massacres of the rich, shelters for beggars, doctrinaires, burning of books and people, ecclesiastical authorisation of torture, birth of the Inquisition. The old atavistic idea of rooting the Church in its original poverty found a new stimulus in a socioeconomic order that legitimated itself by fighting the privileges of the aristocracy, shouting the revolutionary ideas of equality. In the midst of all this, egalitarian utopias flourished, including denunciation of the clergy in league with the rich. Such ideas came from various people: monks, merchants, laypeople, children of merchants, poor commoners, shepherds, etc..

In 1323, Pope John XXII, by means of his papal bull, *Cum inter Nonnullos*, declared that it was heretical to proclaim that Christ and the apostles were poor and had no possessions (Fiore, 2014, p. 222; Sodano, 2014, p. 232). The Church adapted to the pantheon of the new times. In the opinion of Leonardo Boff, this was the beginning of the modern "division in the religious space", which offered public life to the market whereas other religion(s) were ascribed to the sphere of private life. "One does not interfere, nor should interfere, with the other" (Boff, 1992, p. 380). On the one hand, people should avoid the temptation of greed; while on the other hand they should avoid the temptation of good. That is why so many good people, capable of caring for their neighbour in devotion, are also capable of behaving like a professional in their duty, i.e. blind to a neighbour - who is neither, nor can be, a market variable<sup>17</sup>. In the market, good can be incarnated by the devil. Peter Drucker wrote a moral novel in which a character succumbed to the temptation of doing good in his professional life. He helped those who were left behind, promoted inefficiency, and thereby inflicted great harm, because he destroyed value, which is something which simply shouldn't be done (Sung, 2006).

I believe that the essence of secularisation lies herein. Two worlds are rendered completely separate, each with its own authorities and legitimacies, which do not intersect (and do not enter into conflict). In the limit, we would have Marcel Gauchet's formula – religious individuals, an atheistic society (1985, p. 12; 1997, pp. 133, 235-236). We can correct this: as highly religious individuals, an agnostic society (from the perspective of that individual religion)<sup>18</sup>. We know that nuances have been introduced to the classical thesis of secularisation, but it is curious to note that the religious forces which are firmly opposed to such a *division of religious space* are considered to be *radicals: Christian liberation theologians and fundamentalist Islamists* (Boff, 1992, p. 380).

<sup>17</sup> Bichot applies the concept of structural sin to this type of behaviour (from the Catholic Church's Social Doctrine) - the financial and market culture would be a structural sin (Bichot, 2009, pp. 73-85; Costa, 2014, pp. 54-55).

<sup>18</sup> It may be more accurate to refer to (social) agnosticism rather than atheism. It seems to me that Hannah Arendt's idea of communism applies here: it is, from the root, non-religious, which aims that in the future religious questions shouldn't even be posed (Arendt, 1996, p. 143).

It's easy to see in the capitalist expansion that which Hans Küng saw in the history of Christianity and Islam: an "aggressive universal pretension", a "militant universalism" that aims to achieve world victory (see above). Recently, Jonathan Crary (2014) diagnosed the saturation of this total conquest. Having conquered the space, there is still time, which proceeds gradually in the process of conquest, which Crary designates as a 24/7 regime – the market tends to operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Sleep represents idle capacity, i.e. intolerable non-use of the capacity installed in each producer / consumer. The new *economy of idle resources* aims to combat the scourge of under-utilisation of resources, including that of human resources. Kenichi Ohmae, the guru of this evolution, refers to "facilities, equipment or technology" and "skilled professionals", all things that, if there is under-utilisation, can and should be rented because "society as a whole will not be satisfied if it has to settle for second best, i.e. an option which does not optimise the economy's resource allocation". He had an epiphany: "The moment a company is born, it must have the ambition to serve society as a whole. And society is global. That's the beauty of the mobile environment: there are two dominant, equal operating systems everywhere. This represents tremendous growth potential." He denounced temptations: "Europe must become more competitive, not become entangled in a comfortable life. Think about going on vacation when you grow old". We must train the competition with ourselves: "if someone appears and risks destroying our business model, then let it be ourselves (...) [who will guarantee] the survival of the business in other ways"<sup>19</sup>.

As we have seen, the mould is universal. In its genesis, it is modern, i.e. it is intimately linked to the very word *modern*, which itself is modern, having emerged in the sixteenth century to mean the state of things "of the present", but soon after was used to signify the future, which "would be different from the past" and better, always better, in the words of John Gray. The cyclical conception of history defended by the ancients was finished, as well as the medieval view of history, based on the idea of repetition to the end of the world and salvation in the afterlife (2004, pp. 119-120). This better world, in the philosophy of history that sustained it, would expand to the whole world. Since the Portuguese and Spanish explorers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries up to the Americans from "long ago", the idea of a single modernity, equal throughout the world has flourished, with enormous influence as it has accompanied the expansion of the West (Gray, 2004, pp. 15, 65-66). The notion of a single capitalism is not original, since there was also a notion of a single Christianity, and of a single socialism, etc. According to Gray, the success of positivism, which aimed to found a new church, paved the way for Marxism and neoliberalism, as "post-Christian cults", of universal ambition with a "residue of monotheism". At the end of history, summarises Gray, the positivists saw the end of politics, having eliminated scarcity and causes of conflict; there would be a "rational administration" of things<sup>20</sup>. The same is true of communism, that foresaw the withering away of classes and the state. The same is also true of neoliberalism, following the triumph of the invisible hand that coordinates the rational choices that overcome the

<sup>19</sup> Interview by Kenichi Ohmae with Victor Ferreira, *Público*, 2016, 20 March.

<sup>20</sup> Ideas found in various parts of John Gray's book (2004, pp. 121-124).

passions of politics. It is salvation, in this world, and without any alternative - not in Latin or Arabic, but in English.

V. In the narratives of the merciful, omniscient (s) and omnipotent (s) God (s), the aporia of evil in the world drags us towards the question of theodicy. How can we explain the suffering of innocents?

In the narrative of the omnipresent wealth-creating market, the persistence of poverty drags us towards the question of “*plutodicy*”. In other words, just as *theodicy* has to defend how God can be good and omnipotent in view of the existence of evil, a “*plutodicy*” is required to explain the vicious circles of poverty, with their innocents (at least, those born into poverty)?

This a thorny issue, because it can't be summarised as a virtuous consequence of the system. In economic competition, losers are left behind, falling into relative poverty. And it's quite possible that the losers are those of least merit. However, the situation is more complicated than that.

If we want a formula, there it is: new technologies are expansionist, but high salaries aren't – quite the opposite. Américo Mendes exposes the mechanism of two inverse movements: the underdeveloped countries are closer to the developed countries in terms of their technological capacity, but in terms of labour costs the contrary tends to occur. The virtuous circle of second-tier economies disappears in the name of competitiveness. Employment shifts towards economies that have low wages, low social security contributions and low capital taxes (any social conquests that have been achieved and are taken as given, are dismantled) (Mendes, 2005, pp. 97-98). There is an imbalance in favour of one of the parties because, from Bauman's perspective, capital has become extra-territorial whereas people, despite all their mobility, remain territorial. As a result, capital accumulation becomes independent of any local commitment to labour (Bauman, 2004, p. 148). Moreover, in the daily press there are often news reports that the compulsion to reduce labour costs on a global scale doesn't simply lead to low wages, but to very low wages. These are the “potentially infernal shadows” cited at the beginning of this text.

Alerts against poverty no longer solely focus on inter-national disparities, shifting towards a line of global disparities, unrelated to any “methodological nationalism”. Income inequality doesn't stop at national borders, it spreads to rich countries. Wealth produces everything everywhere - even poverty.

John Gray paints an even darker picture: “Neo-liberal utopians expected that globalisation would fill the world with liberal republics, linked together in peace and trade. History is responding with a flowering of war, tyranny and empire” (Gray, 2004, pp. 131-132). He doesn't seem to be exaggerating.

The market, if viewed as an earthly religion, is compelled to develop an earthly theology. Just retribution, salvation, and *plutodicy* (see above) have their feet planted firmly on the ground. It is therefore a pity that the market can't use solution of extra-terrestrial retribution, which is very attractive for undeserved suffering when in the form of an inverted order (“the last shall be first”)<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> For a classical sociological approach to the problem of retribution and theodicy, see Costa (2009, pp. 67-69) and Weber (1983).

The solution of the *electi* delivers some embarrassment. In fact, it betrays universalism, as well as suggesting an extra-terrestrial world and creates connotations with another religion (that of private life) that would repel many believers from other religions and those who don't have any religion at all. In addition, this solution establishes poverty as a fatality, which defies the promise of generalised prosperity to all entrepreneurs. However, it has its set of conventicles, confirming Weber's theses of the opposition between virtuosos and mere believers (or the masses) and the religious necessity of privileged persons to legitimise their own privilege. The theologian Hayek established the doctrine: satisfaction of ordinary consumption is "natural for the simple wage-earner," but it is by no means natural for the great entrepreneur who, through infinite capital accumulation, sees the means of "exercising his vocation" (Hayek, 1991, pp. 391-392). From the cloisters of Wall Street, echoes the refrain that gives meaning to life: "The One Who Dies With the Most Money Wins!".

Without leaving the earthly realm, we can consider that which Weber regarded as "the most formally perfect solution to the theodicy problem" - the karma-based doctrine, which secures the retribution of past works, whether good or bad, through the transmissions of souls. "Each individual forges his own destiny exclusively, and in the strictest sense of the word" (Weber, 1983, p. 416). This is, however, a very imperfect solution, since, besides appealing to another religion, it promises earthly retribution, indeed, but only after death. If we use the language of Stark and Bainbridge, the market provides retribution by means of rewards (effective, tangible) rather than compensators (intangible substitutes for rewards that don't exist in this world, in particular through the promise of triumph over death) (Stark & Bainbridge, 1980).

From other religious traditions, it is possible to latch onto the idea of the hidden god (*deus absconditus*). The ways of the market, with its invisible hand, are unfathomable. It's a bit like Pontius Pilate in the Creed, displaced in a world of rational choices, unveiled by a mathematical economy. Friedrich Hayek, the influential theologian (as Arnsperger calls him), took an important step forward. He was convinced that discussions about a *fair price* and *fair salary* were scholastic frivolities, but he nonetheless evolved from the scholastic to stochastic. The free market maximizes the opportunities of all entrepreneurs and the chances for merit to be rewarded, but it does not reduce the bottleneck of opportunities to zero, or the perhaps random instances of merit that don't receive the deserved prize. The better the market works, the fewer such dysfunctions will exist, which derive from an impersonal mechanism, and therefore have nothing to do with justice or injustice (anthropomorphic concepts) (Hayek, 1982, pp. 77-78, 108-110). It is a version of "we need more and better market" for the sake of affluence and peaceful cooperation.

Michael Novak adopts a similar thesis: capitalism is the system that generates the least poverty, and the one that thrives the most from poverty. The more and better capitalism we have, the less poverty there will be. This reveals the evident conclusion that large-scale poverty is not a fatality. The very pattern of capitalist wealth ends up having the perverse effect of greatly overstating the number of real poor. The majority of the "false" poor are actually parasites who live off the imperfections of capitalism, and prefer to live on welfare rather than from honest work; Apart from these "false poor", a small



minority would in fact be unable to sustain themselves (Novak, 2001, pp. 215-230). In other words, there will always be poor people.

What is missing from this theological breviary is what Weber called the *religiosity of resentment*, based on vindictive retribution (1983, pp. 395-397). In its application to the religion of public life, analysed in this article, it is summarily dismissed because much of it comes from that other theologian - Karl Marx – and is immediately rejected because it is materialist.

**VI.** The division of the religious space specified by Leonardo Boff hasn't impeded the conflict between religions of different spaces. They avoid each other whenever they can and want, but given that they actually intersect, they will sooner or later enter into litigation.

The papal bull, *Cum inter Nonnullos*, was an attempt, in the Catholic Church, to abolish potential conflicts between the religion of public life and the private healing of souls. It was an argument of authority, with its limitations. Christians live in this world, and therefore end up by having to face the theologies of this world. Quiletic and egalitarian utopias continued to emerge from Christian soil in many forms. More moderate minds have engendered ecumenical ideas of conciliation between the two worlds, so that one does not paralyse the other, avoiding excesses of retrogressive pauperisms, as well as resentments of civil war between the rich and poor. This was the seedbed of the Catholic Church's modern Social Doctrine, which, from the beginning, aimed to reconfigure the world operated by capitalism. The founding encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (1891) thus resulted from the "taste for new things" and its "grave implications": "the abundance of wealth in the hands of a small number and the destitution of the multitude" (nº 1). Since then, the same purulent wound continues to feed the social thinking of the successors of Pope Leo XIII, viewed as "a fact of moral order" by Pope John Paul II (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987, nº 9), in other words as a "morally unacceptable" fact (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 2009, nº 32). In keeping with the times, papal documents have redefined the nature of the wound, stating that it is caused not only by absolute indigence, but also by "disparities in wealth", through the "systemic increase of social inequality, both within a single country and between the populations of different countries (i.e. the massive increase in relative poverty)" (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, nº 32). The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, in the Note of 2011, reinforced the Pope's diagnosis, using very harsh language, in relation to liberal, utilitarian and technocratic ideologies<sup>22</sup>.

In the same encyclical, Pope Benedict XVI, the conservative pope, bluntly looked at several local effects of global capital, to which Manuela Silva and Américo Mendes drew attention. States are emboldened to attract foreign investment, knowing that they can only do so by reducing costs, linked to labour costs and other aspects: wages, social security contributions, taxes on profits. Hence the denunciation made in *Caritas in*

<sup>22</sup> See "Towards Reforming the International Financial and Monetary System in the context of Global Public Authority". Retrieved from [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\\_pc\\_justpeace](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace)

*Veritate*: “deregulation of the labour market”, with “consequent grave danger for the rights of workers, for fundamental human rights and for the solidarity associated with the traditional forms of the social State”, extending to “trade union freedoms” and the “negotiating capacity of labour unions” (a good to be “honoured today even more than in the past”) (n° 25).

Nor have the extraterritorial protagonists of the new order been forgotten, nor their loyalties: “ In recent years a new cosmopolitan class of managers has emerged, who are often answerable only to the shareholders generally consisting of anonymous funds which *de facto* determine their remuneration” (n° 40)<sup>23</sup>. No. 21 denounces the “damaging effects on the real economy of badly managed and largely speculative financial dealing”<sup>24</sup>.

Perhaps because he was, besides being a conservative pope, an intellectual pope, Ratzinger dismantled the “consensus industry”<sup>25</sup> prevailing in current economic thinking: “the market, in its pure state, does not exist”: it is a cultural and ideological construction, morally not neutral, that can be well or badly directed and that has its dysfunctions which require correct correction (*Caritas in Veritate*, n° 36).

This idea probably inspired another Conservative pope who, almost eighty years earlier, wanted to restore and perfect the social order “in accordance with gospel law.” In 1931, Pope Pius XI published the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, because he was worried about the direction taken by the world (following the 1929 crash). N° 88, stated: “Economic dictatorship has supplanted free competition”, is “ it is a headstrong power and a violent energy that, to benefit people, needs to be strongly curbed and wisely ruled. But it cannot curb and rule itself. “ Another Conservative pope, as well as an anti-Communist – Pope John Paul II – had already denounced the “idolatry of the market” in *Centesimus Annus* (1991, n° 40)<sup>26</sup>.

This doctrine, which was already clear, has accelerated in recent years. However, it seemed that it didn’t exist, apart from one or other occasional controversy<sup>27</sup>. It was then that a new Pope exhibited it, shouting “this economy kills”. Suddenly, everyone realised that he had forgotten something. One would be tempted to say, from the reactions, that he had published a *Cum Inter Nonnullos* in reverse, when, in fact, in these points he had only opened the doctrine that had already been established by his predecessors. In fact, this question was extensively analysed in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013): n° 202 which proclaimed that “Inequality is the root of social ills”, while in the following number the insistent formulation highlights the intention of repeating an idea to the point of exhaustion – “It is irksome when the question of ethics is raised, when global solidarity is invoked, when the distribution of goods is mentioned, when reference is made to protecting labour and defending the dignity of the powerless, when allusion is made to a God who demands a commitment to justice”.

<sup>23</sup> A concern already expressed in *Quadragesimo Anno*, issued by Pope Pio XI (n°. 105).

<sup>24</sup> *Quadragesimo Anno* also revealed concerns on this point (n°. 106 and n°. 109).

<sup>25</sup> Expression used by Assmann and Hinkelammert (1993, p. 83) to designate current dominant economic thought and the extent to which it forgets other schools of economic thought.

<sup>26</sup> For a more developed exposition of these aspects of the Catholic Church’s Social Doctrine, see Costa (2014).

<sup>27</sup> For example, at the time of publication of *Caritas in Veritate*.

Pope Francis clearly provoked major concern to some people because he did this with the Catholic Church's Social Doctrine rather than with "theology". He thereby interfered in the sphere of another religion without any sense of diplomacy, and the latter responded, with little or no diplomacy, as if it were willing to start a religious war. The Pope was declared to be ignorant of economics, unaware of the virtues of distributive inequality and of competition, and of embracing the utopia of a Christian communism, which is espoused in his native Latin America, in the form of *liberation theology*. He was accused of forgetting that the Samaritan was merciful because he was rich. As a corollary: Pope Francis "only has to offer the poor, compassion and alms"<sup>28</sup>. This last reprimand is curious because a system of generalised alms, which might substitute charity rummage fairs with solidarity campaigns, is precisely what the Pope doesn't want to happen. And in this, he is following the *Caritas in Veritate* issued by Pope Benedict XVI who wasn't accused of ignorance: distributive justice must govern the market economy (n° 35), and the "canons of justice must be respected from the outset, as the economic process unfolds, and not just afterwards or incidentally" (no. 37). Without such scruples, this will lead to "paternalist social assistance that is demeaning to those in need" (n° 58).

In his New Year homily of 2015, Pope Francis condemned all forms of modern slavery. In December 2014, he had addressed consumers, who are almost always forgotten in moral evaluation of the economic chain. He asked them not to buy low-priced products based on ultra low-cost labour, close to serfdom or slavery, immersed in the huge web of production, exchange and consumption of globalisation (*Público*, 2015, January 2). This would be a modern "slavery", with global slave traders and local foremen.

The Pope's reputation was thereby irreversibly defined. His messages are shaped by this reputation. In mid-2015, he published the encyclical *Laudato Si*, which was quickly described as the *ecological encyclical*. He took up the teachings of several of his predecessors, but his reputation absolutely superseded them at all, and renewed force was given to the old concept of the universal destination of goods, starting with the Earth as our common home, which shouldn't be trumped by the interests of large economic groups or perverse property relations.

The encyclical's title (*Laudato si* - Praise be to you) lies within the spirit of Franciscan poverty. Conventual or spiritual?

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<sup>28</sup> See Hengsbach (2014), which gives a good account of these reactions to the Apostolic Exhortation.

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