

Between Omega Point and Apatheism: A society that ignores transcendence leaves it to its ideological opponents

In times of accelerated technological upheaval, ecological crises, and cultural fragmentation, the age-old question of the function of religion in the political sphere arises once again. If Marx's thesis about the opium of the people is correct, then the posthuman secularization of the West not only marks the retreat of religion but also the opening for new ideological substitute religions - technocratic, authoritarian, or nationalist. Thus, democratization is not prevented but metaphysically legitimized. The classic opposition between church and state, between religion and modernity, seems to have been overcome. But what has taken its place? The thesis of this essay is: religion today functions in many ways as an ideological superstructure for political systems. Different theological paradigms create resonance spaces in which conceptions of political order are symbolically condensed. These resonances range from authoritarian ideologies to the open society.

Anyone who questions the political impact of theology today must analyze not only what churches say, but also what spiritual offerings they make or omit. The very renunciation of metaphysical depth in some forms of contextual theology—for example, Jan Löffel's—creates a vacuum that others readily fill: traditionalists, fundamentalists, and identity movements. However, this dynamic can also be thought of in reverse. When religious beliefs cooperate with political ideologies, the obvious question arises: Which theology suits which society?

Neo-reactionary orders and authoritarian theologies

The complicity of neo-reactionary political movements with a restorative theology is exemplary: Opus Dei in Catholicism, the Prosperity Gospel in American evangelicalism, and Orthodox monarchy theologies in Russia. These movements are united by a longing for order, discipline, hierarchical structure, and metaphysical safeguarding of existing power relations. Their theology is dogmatic, authoritarian, and offers a clear identity. Transcendence is not negated but placed in the service of control. Heaven is the legitimation for the earthly order.

Posthumanist orders and hollowed-out theology

In contrast, there is a functional theology as it appears in some contexts of pastoral theology or modern religious education. It consciously refrains from metaphysical statements, working with narratives, contexts, and social spatial analyses. Its goal is to connect with the life world of the secular, a post-human and technologically supported rule by committees that replaces inefficient democracy. And it is precisely this connection that creates a deficit: Those who avoid transcendence create a void that does not remain unfilled. In a world that dreams of superintelligence, cybernetics, and biological optimization, such theology can easily be misused as a spiritual service for transhumanists. The supposedly demythologized Christianity becomes an ethical resonance space for a post-human technocracy.

Multipolar world orders and religious nationalisms

In the emerging multipolar world order of the BRICS states, another constellation is emerging: Orthodoxy in Russia, pro-state evangelicals in Brazil, Chinese Protestantism (Chinese Christian Council), a patriotic people's church separated from Rome (Catholic-Patriotic Association) and an autocephalous Chinese Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, all with Confucian influences (in the autonomous regions, by contrast, typically Western church structures dominate, and throughout China, autonomous underground churches dominate) – all of these are forms of a theology that blends national identity, cultural distinctiveness, and spiritual depth. Religion here becomes the medium of an identity-based world order that counters the West's universal claims. Here, too, transcendence has a place – but it is tied to people, territory, blood, and soil.

The open society and the spiritual cosmology

The question remains: Is there a theology that fits an open society? A society as conceived by Karl Popper as a space of critical rationality and David Deutsch as a space of unlimited explainability? A society that understands freedom, criticism, and development not as a threat, but as a condition of progress? The answer cannot lie in an outdated dogmatism, but neither can it lie in an empty pastoral theology. It may lie in a third path: a spiritual cosmology.

Consider Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who understood Christ as the omega point of cosmic evolution. Consider Carsten Bresch, who attempted to build a bridge between biology and theology with his theory of directed mutation. Or Ilia Delio, who combines Whitehead's process philosophy with Franciscan mysticism. These theologies do not shy away from transcendence, but they do not instrumentalize it. They conceive of God as a horizon, not as a ruler; as a source of becoming, not as a brake on change.

Such a theology would not have to invent a new spirituality. Rather, it could draw from the depths of Christian tradition—from its mysticism, its hope, its cosmological breadth—as it is alive in Teilhard de Chardin's vision of the Omega Point, in Carsten Bresch's natural theology of evolution, or in Ilia Delio's processual theopoetics. It is a spirituality that does not oppose critical rationalism, but it offers a counterpart that embodies depth instead of control, meaning instead of dogma, hope instead of regression.

Conclusion: Theology as a cultural technique of freedom

Theology today is practiced either as a support for order or as a form of adaptation. What is missing, however, is a theology of openness: one that takes transcendence seriously without monopolizing it; one that offers orientation without absolutizing identity; one that thinks cosmically without dissolving boundaries. Such a theology could be the "superstructure" of a free society—not as an instrument of power, but as an expression of its spiritual maturity.

Those who fear transcendence leave it to those who abuse it. Those who shape it give freedom a heaven.