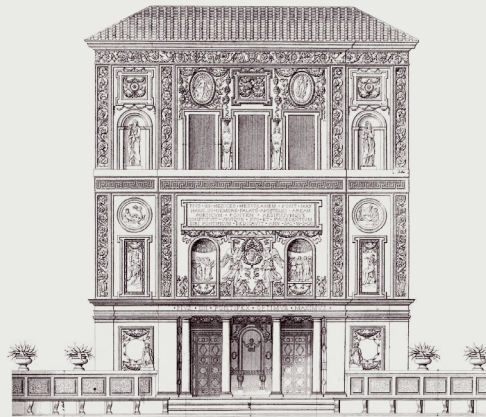


Conference

Technical thinking and capitalism. Considerations on the evolution of a complicated relationship

Thursday, September 28th, 2023 – Casina Pio IV, Vatican City



On technology that conceives capitalism

that is,

On the thinking of man who thinks about technical thinking

Report by

Vittorio Emanuele Falsitta

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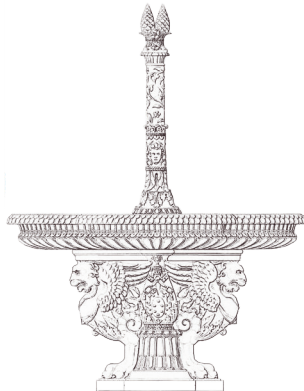
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Summary

1. Introduction to the relationship between technical thought, capitalism, and technology. Preliminary theses and conclusions are presented. Submission;

2. The *techno-formative* process. Or, on how technique occupies space and transforms it to make it functional to accelerate its own development. Contaminations; physical space and immaterial space. Rilke and technical Orphism: life as *death in motion*; the market of thinkable thought, or on the colonization of transcendence and the end of the possibility of salvation; **2.1. Follows.** The contamination of transcendence. The market of the thought-out thought and the threat of salvation;

3. Illustration of the thesis. Technical thought, capitalism, and technology are *the amniotic fluid* of the dazed society: criticism of the myopia of the debate on the governance of technology (especially AI); illustration of the thesis: the search for rules to control technology – as it happens – does not seem so relevant: the anticipated results seem permeated with *an internal, genotypic temporariness*; above all *what needs to be changed is not technology, but the relationship between capitalism and technique*; the answer is obtained through the use of technology itself; it proposes a circular path in which, *through technology* (passing via capitalism and technical thought), there is a return to the control of technology; technology can modify capitalism (eliminating negative social externalities) and, following this path, *bring technical thought back into the domain of human thought*; the idea is to generate digital industrial districts where the integration of Artificial Intelligence and blockchain technology prevents the development of corruption, information asymmetry, tax evasion, fraud, etc., and allows a return to the pursuit of social justice; ‘white papers’ as special economic constitutions of experimental digital industrial districts (DDS), freely chosen by citizens.

1. Introduction to the relationship between technical thought, capitalism, and technology. Preliminary theses and conclusions are presented.
Submission

The world before us is mostly given by the form of the relationship among three objects: Technique, capitalism, and technology. Specifically, it is the result of how technique and capitalism interpret each other; how one *determines* the other (¹). Since what I will say is based on their combination within this relationship, I have the preliminary obligation to clarify what I mean by technique, capitalism, and technology in the context of the presentation of this thesis.

Technique is thought; it is the will to multiply purposes indiscriminately and pursue them (²); it wants to have an end, a purpose, precisely because having and achieving it is always possible (³).

¹ Unfortunately, the general debate often tends to confuse technology with technique (hence the ‘product’ with the force that wanted it) and now, almost entirely forgets the role played by capitalism. Blinded by the marvels of scientific discoveries, this also occurs in specialized literature, the discussion interchanges ‘technique and technology’ (hence ‘cause and effect’) with dangerous nonchalance and ends up losing the focus of things: will that establishes purposes.

² Reference is to the traditional approach of twentieth-century philosophy of technique and, specifically, to Severino.

³ On TV as well, from time to time, there are advertisements that come to an end claiming: *anything is possible for technology!* An effective summary of what I am suggesting.

1.

Regarding ‘**capitalism**’ – a slippery term to be always used with caution – I have in mind *acting to maximize profit* that, violating its own internal rules, *produces negative social externalities* (from unfair income and wealth discrimination to environmental collapse) ⁽⁴⁾; I mean a *culture now degraded to a force which is often merely predatory*, which has overpowered the market economy.

With **technology**, I conclude the review, the ‘worldly’ application of technical thought: its embodiment, ‘artificial’ products; TV, the device that allows you to look inside the heart’s blood vessels, that is AI, the product resulting from the application of science in every sector.

From the combination of these ‘pieces’, in the framework of the relationship we described, we find the representation of a significant part of the world.

* * *

Now, according to an authoritative way of thinking ⁽⁵⁾, technique, in the modern world, undergoes a metamorphosis: *from*

⁴ A functional use of capital to self-produce capital that ends up distorting the mechanisms of a healthy market economy; violations of internal rules (e.g.: competition) cause unfair social divides in terms of income and wealth, and these, in turn, phenomena of incivility.

⁵The reference, again, is to Severino’s work.

1.

a means at the service of capitalism, it becomes the purpose of capitalism itself. Capitalism (which, as mentioned, has deformities; which easily, sometimes, manages to trample human rights simply to increase profits) can no longer exist except through technique and therefore technology, which allows the creation of wealth, seemingly without end. From one purpose to another. From one market to another.

The purpose of my speech is to offer some food for thought on *the possibility of rethinking the relationship between Technique and capitalism* (which I consider the cause of the acceleration towards the progressive civil decay of man); a new relationship *functional to redefine the prerequisites for a society where wealth is produced and redistributed with greater justice, and where human thought can continue to administer technical thought.* I anticipate in points the idea (which I will discuss in the last part of the report):

I. the relationship between technique and capitalism can be

⁶ Bitcoin's blockchain software has demonstrated, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that technology conceals phenomena of corruption and fraud; Vitalik Buterin, with Ethereum, initially set out to use the blockchain for broader purposes than Bitcoin's monetary ones, and devised the prerequisites for so-called decentralized finance, with the use of smart contracts (which carry out their own negotiating program, without human intervention).

1.

- modified by technology (6);
- II. technology can be used to eliminate negative social externalities – generated by capitalism – linked to the production and exchange of goods and services;
 - III. from this perspective, *technology is used to cut off the routes that supply corruption, abuses, information asymmetries* over the violation of competition rules, and to re-establish the concept of loyalty and fair profit;
 - IV. capitalism, freed from the distortions caused by technology, is *weakened* and thus *weakens the technical thought* with which it shares development; as a result, this path – due to a new sense of *greed* – offers the possibility for man to regain authentic control of technique and technology (Artificial Intelligence, etc.).

2. The techno-forming process. Or, on how technology occupies space and transforms it to make it functional to the acceleration of its own development. Material space and immaterial space. Rilke and technical Orphism: death in motion; the market of thinkable thought, or on the colonization of transcendence and the end of the possibility of salvation

The accelerated development of technology evokes reminiscent visions of the world and human life. In every field. Always. Although I will not deal with these interpretations, therefore, of the perception of the future in the scheme of technical programs and the forces that act with it (I will not even deal with techno enthusiasts – transhumanists, techno-progressives, techno-depressed – apocalyptic, etc.), I cannot however avoid some considerations *on the way* technical thought (aroused by the connection with deformed capitalist ideology) occupies human spaces – any space – with the aim of techno-forming them (⁷): that is, to give them a form instrumental to the acceleration of technological development. Observed from above (sometimes, things seen from above are perceived better than from below) the idea dissolves into a sinister shadow; in a worrying subversion; in a silent, unexpected, reversal of views; ‘the hand is rethought based on

⁷ On the process of technoformation, Cf. the works of Luciano Floridi, most recently: *Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, Varese, 2022; Michio Kaku, *The Future of Humanity*, Milan, 2018.

2.

the anatomy of the phone that it must hold, and not vice versa'. And, indeed, one thing is the man who governs the technique and demands the modification of matter, of the environment in which it must express itself; another matter, however, is when it is technique, and not man, that establishes the modification of the environment. A matter of *existential millimeters*, but, the 'entirety' is here! In this very moment, the perishable nature of man surrenders to the eternal force of technique; man *gives up*; an act of abandonment that passes through valves that open or close his essence, reduced to liquid. It may be – because it stands out from the incidental – the definitive transformation of the outside world! But this must happen by the hands of man who administers technique ⁽⁸⁾ – bodily hands – and not from technique that administers man. Rilke sees life in the transformation of the moment ⁽⁹⁾: only there; in becoming, in the transition from one state to another; beyond is unstoppable decay. In this sense, the alteration, the substitution of technique for human administration is life that switches off, once and for all; what is left on the field is *Orphic matter*: death in motion; a lavish deception for mankind.

⁸ It is not sufficient to observe the – exciting – properties of the result to judge it: one must understand the trigger. A case where “before” is more relevant than “after”.

⁹ For example in: *The Sonnets of Orpheus*.

2.1. Follows. *The contamination of transcendence. The market of thinkable thought and the threat of salvation*

The occupation of human space, reflecting the general process of transforming the natural world into an artificial world, aims to reverse the 'human - technique - nature' relationship. This relationship is no longer suitable; we need to reverse subject and object: 'technique - human - nature'. In short, human evolution must conform to technique's evolution and comply to its rules: *what are the principles that govern the evolution of technique?* Rationality and efficiency. Man and his environment, in the techno-forming action, are therefore called to progressively become an expression of rationality and efficiency. But rationality and efficiency – by 'nature' – do not admit anything that is not explainable according to rationality and efficiency; they do not admit, for example, what is justified in irrationality; one above all: love (and its corollaries) and, in general, feelings that cannot be measured in terms of convenience within a system⁽¹⁰⁾. The retention of human evolution into the technical model – in other words – orders man to abandon humanity, weaknesses, mistakes, even God (ultimately, to abandon what has led us to be what we are). They are part of my core research. Here, I limit myself to observing that unlike technology that

¹⁰ If there is solidarity, it is an expression of calculation.

2.1.

shows itself mainly on a physical level (the car's navigator is there, it can be touched), technique as thought is a priori and, as such, much more invasive. It anticipates and contaminates every good before it becomes physical: from things to any kind of standards, to legal systems, to words... But above all, it wants to techno-form the human mind. On the one hand, it tends to occupy unconscious life in order to induce man to act with automatisms lacking moral resistance. Reject filters. Mediations. Ethical mediations that can hinder the affirmation of technology ⁽¹⁾; man must automatically accept the technological offer because it is the solution that improves life or, in any case, it is necessary.

If, on the one hand, as mentioned, technique tries to contaminate unconscious forces and manipulate will before it emerges through external manifestation, on the other hand, it aims to seize transcendence: it transforms it into digital and physical territory. Here, the watchwords of technical thought become: *to predict the thinkable, to reorganize it, to make it the artificial abode*

¹ Consider, as an example, the 'cut and sew' of genomic technology – CRISPR/Cas9 –, freedom in civilian surveillance systems: facial recognition etc.

2.1.

of the spirit before the transcendent thought, not yet artificial and therefore not influenced by technical thought, seeks it, finds it, recognizes itself in it, and thus techno-forms itself.

It is the mercantile frontier of transcendence. It is the frontier towards which Zuckerberg's metaverse advances. A vertigo. To invade thinking before it is thought, with products that indulge the spirit, like sweet music. Naturally, this will be possible as far as we are enthralled by the infosphere; by online life ⁽¹²⁾. When our transcendental needs are anticipated and supported by an already thought because it is conceived precisely to satisfy them, then, we are headed for death. Occupying the transcendent spirit with the artificial, means removing the only place where man can find the road to salvation through meditation. St. Bonaventure (in *The Journey of the Mind to God*) states that this is where understanding is formed; in harmony, in balance, equidistant from objects, in contemplation we recover the forces of the soul and psyche. From here, we can think of governing technical thought. Only from here. That's why it must always be a free and uncontaminated space. Contrary to what has al-

¹² On this point, extensively Cf. E. Mazzarella, *Against metaverse. Saving presence*, Milan-Udine, 2022.

2.1.

ways been claimed (i.e., that technique satisfies material well-being but leaves a void concerning spiritual life) the action of technique (emancipated thought in contemporary times, desire of dominating power) tends to fill even the void (even spiritual life) with the synthetic product of itself, and thus takes freedom away from man via *the possibility of transcendence* ⁽¹³⁾.

¹³ A common mistake is to refer the program of technology to ourselves: its wildest ambitions always seem eccentric, extreme, dystopian; after all, they make us smile; but to refer those ambitions to ourselves, to our way of life, is a mistake because we are inevitably obliged to consider them in a time – the present – in which things are yet to be transformed; for example, to imagine that transcendent thinking can be anticipated and automatically conveyed to the (already thought) thinking of others (and made available for commercial purposes), is unacceptable to us today. And, indeed, from the conditions of observation in which we find ourselves, it can only appear absurd; for technology, however, our opinion is irrelevant because we are biologically irrelevant. What we think doesn't matter. The world it wants is not this one, but the future one of those who will be born today!

3. Illustration of the thesis. Technical thinking, capitalism, and technology are the amniotic fluid of the stunned society: criticism of the shortsightedness of the debate on technology governance (especially AI); illustration of the thesis: the search for rules to control technology – as it happens – does not seem so relevant: the envisaged results seem permeated by an internal, genotypic provisionality; what must be changed firstly is not technology, but the relationship between capitalism and technique; the answer is obtained through the use of technology itself; a circular path is proposed whereby, precisely through technology (going through capitalism and technical thinking), technology is controlled once again; technology can change capitalism (eliminating negative social externalities) and, via this route, bring technical thought back under the domain of human thought; the idea is to generate digital industrial districts where the integration of artificial intelligence and blockchain technology prevents the development of corruption, information asymmetry, tax evasion, fraud, etc., and allows a return to the pursuit of social justice; ‘white papers’ as special economic constitutions of experimental digital industrial districts (DDS), freely chosen by citizens.

Man’s evolution according to naturalistic programs tends to be absorbed by the evolution of technique. Evolution regulated exclusively by the principles of rationality and efficiency. Rationality and efficiency, in turn, require a concurrent endeavor to re-ontologize the world. New meanings, new values to reorganize the goods of life. From the broadest and most general: good, evil,

3.

beauty, ugliness, positive, negative, to the most specific. Technique's plan aimed at dominating man, however, if not stopped altogether ⁽¹⁴⁾, I believe, can at least be slowed down, with great benefit. This would happen *where possible, through some 'predetermination', that would weaken the current model of capitalism* ⁽¹⁵⁾. Indeed, since technique and capitalism are closely linked, the attenuation of one (capitalism) can but affect the other (technique). The weakening of the force of technique allows for a genuine political debate (ethical, economic, and legal): precisely because the greed of technical thinking and capitalism – to such an extent – decrease their influence on the premises ⁽¹⁶⁾.

¹⁴ Essential is the reference to the interview given by Heidegger to *Der Spiegel* in 1966 (published in 1976), in the part where he refers to the dominant development of technology, which is basically undeniable.

¹⁵ As mentioned, broadly distorted, and often an uncivilized tool because of the unfair economic consequences it causes for society.

¹⁶ Codes of ethics, codes of conduct, legal norms etc. to be applied to software programming, even well calibrated to risk indications such as those developed in European or international legislation are certainly a step forward but, for the writer, not entirely decisive. In the phase in which we find ourselves, where the rules of human action are excessively contaminated (and therefore influenced) by the technical/capitalist relationship, it is difficult to think that choices limiting technology do not suffer from a feeling of 'self-mutilation' (the market that chooses to limit its revenues to limit itself). Prohibitions, barriers, constraints to research and artifact design will always tend to be formulated by the legislator (whose technical thinking acts) in a flexible, adjustable way and allows – thanks to interpretation – the progressive erosion of the margins of prohibitions (or among the definitions of risk).

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From this perspective, in short, a space opens for a thought higher than the mere technical and capitalist economic thought (as repeatedly clarified).

How is it possible to weaken the current model of capitalism? Philosophically, by exchanging goals (technique/capitalism); or rather, by adding to the goals of technical thinking the purpose of eliminating, through technology the negative social externalities of capitalism ⁽¹⁷⁾. Blocking ex ante market access routes via which corruption, abuses, information asymmetries, and those illicit human actions that affect the correct functioning of market forces (e.g., competition) pass, means depriving of air (or rather, avoiding the supply of oxygen) to some significant causes that bring social injustice (within the framework of the distorted model of capitalism). And all this, with the utmost respect for everyone's freedom of choice.

How is it possible to eliminate the assumptions of the negative social externalities of the current model of capitalism? The idea is to experimentally create *digital industrial and commercial districts*

¹⁷ More precisely, I envisage a temporary reversal of purposes: if technique has become the purpose of capitalism, a new capitalism must be conceived as the purpose of technique: the new model achieved by the application of specific technology.

3.

governed by technology: Artificial Intelligence integrated with blockchain technology, then smart contracts, and oracles. This technology is entrusted with the technical purpose of re-thinking a new model of capitalism: a new market whose functioning is established in advance by the same actors, and made resistant to unjust human interferences that may reflect on the correct distribution of resources. A market described to users a priori, shared and freely accepted by adhering to the rules set in the so-called ‘white paper’: an instruction sheet, which, in the vision offered, collects the legal, moral, and deontological rules assigned to instruct automatic contracts within the blockchain. Legal and economic programs *constituting* the specific digital market where, once accepted, the product (goods or services) is obtained through procedures autonomously managed by specialized technology, according to rules that cannot be manipulated by human weakness.

The multiplication and diffusion of digital districts/markets, entrusted to integrated technology as mentioned above, *could encourage the transformation of the current form of capitalism towards a civilized and environmental economy, as repeatedly emphasized by Pope Francis.*

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What I humbly propose in this context is the initiation of a debate on the possibility of achieving that goal along the lines outlined.

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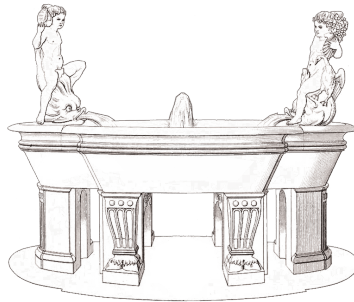
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