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Friedrich Hölderlin or Emanuele Severino? The Sacral Dimension of Nature in the Context of Modern Technology

Friedrich Hölderlin czy Emanuele Severino?
Sakralny wymiar natury w kontekście współczesnej techniki

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Abstract: The main purpose of inquiries undertaken in this study is to present a synthesis of the views of the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin and the Italian thinker Emanuele Severino on nature and technology, and to analyze the contemporary manifestations of the re-sacralization of nature in many ecological currents, as discussed in her studies by the French philosopher Chantal Delsol. For Hölderlin, nature is never limited to being an empirical object of scientific investigation. It is a divine reality that does not undergo change. It is a space inhabited by the sacred. Nature constitutes the sacred All, beyond which nothing else exists. Severino, in turn, analyzes the impact of modern technology on nature, man and the entire existing world. He believes science and modern technology have become an extremely effective tool of man's dominion over the natural world. The Italian philosopher says that today the human will to power applied to nature leads to its objectification and desacralization. Delsol, on the other hand, points out that throughout Western culture we are now witnessing the birth of a new religion of nature, which is a modern form of ancient paganism. The analyses performed demonstrate that, on the one hand, nature is currently being subjected to profound changes due to science and technology, while on the other – its former sacral character is being restored, forming the foundation of a new form of religiosity.

Keywords: nature, technology, environmental philosophy, religion, secularization, nihilism, atheism, pantheism

Streszczenie: Głównym celem dociekań podjętych w tym opracowaniu jest syntetyczna prezentacja poglądów niemieckiego poety Friedricha Hölderlina oraz włoskiego myśliciela Emanuela Severina na temat natury i techniki oraz analiza współczesnych przejawów ponownej sakralizacji natury w wielu nurtach ekologicznych, o czym mówi w swoich opracowaniach francuska filozofka Chantal Delsol. Dla Hölderlina natura nigdy nie ogranicza się do bycia empirycznym przedmiotem badań naukowych. Stanowi boską rzeczywistość, która nigdy się nie zmienia. Jest ona przestrzenią zamieszkałą przez to, co sakralne. Natura stanowi sakralne Wszystko, poza którym nic innego nie istnieje. Z kolei Severino poddaje analizie wpływ współczesnej techniki na naturę, człowieka i cały istniejący świat. Jego zdaniem nauka i nowoczesne technologie stały się niezwykle skutecznym narzędziem panowania człowieka nad światem przyrody. Włoski filozof twierdzi, że obecnie ludzka wola mocy stosowana wobec natury prowadzi do jej uprzedmiotowienia i desakralizacji. Natomiast Delsol zwraca uwagę na to, że w całym zachodnim kręgu kulturowym mamy dzisiaj do czynienia z narodzinami nowej religii natury, która stanowi współczesną formę starożytnego pogaństwa. Przeprowadzone analizy wykazały, że obecnie natura, z jednej strony, jest poddawana głębokim zmianom za sprawą nauki i techniki, z drugiej – odzyskuje swój dawny sakralny charakter, stając się fundamentem nowej formy religijności.

Słowa kluczowe: natura, technika, filozofia środowiskowa, religia, sekularyzacja, nihilizm, ateizm, panteizm

Introduction

One of the characteristics of the present historical era is a very specific approach to nature and the natural world, involving the interpenetration of two opposing cultural and civilization currents. On the one hand, there is the scientific and technological revolution, which expands man's dominion over the natural world and contributes to the gradual loss of its sacral dimension. On the other hand, particularly in the Western cultural circle, there is a resurgence of a new pantheistic religion of nature, which greatly emphasizes the divinity and sacredness of everything that exists.

The relationship that exists between technology and nature has been analyzed by a number of researchers representing various fields of knowledge. The works of the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) and the Italian philosopher Emanuele Severino (1929-2020) offer very interesting comments on the subject. The issue of a new understanding of nature and pantheistic religiosity in Western culture is also present in the works of the French thinker Chantal Delsol (1947-).

The sacredness of nature is strongly emphasized in Hölderlin's work. The German poet views it not just as a collection of biological or empirical realities. In order for that which exists to be transformed into nature, it requires the action of the spirit which brings unity into the world and makes life rich, profound, and mysterious, that is, divine. Nature is the space where the sacred resides. For Hölderlin, nature is never limited to being an empirical object of scientific investigation. Nor can it be reduced to the mere sum of objects or living organisms.

Emanuele Severino, on the other hand, is a radical critic of modern technological civilization. In his view, modern technology means replacing God's absolute rule over the world with man's will to power. The power of technology becomes an end in itself. Technology has the intrinsic ability to expand its own power and dominion, its

continuous growth has become the ultimate goal. This subordination is what the rule of technology in our times consists in. Such kind of technology leads to the objectification of nature and the loss of its sacral dimension.

How does Friedrich Hölderlin characterize the sacral dimension of nature and the divinity that dwells within it? Why does Emanuele Severino subject modern technology and the technological civilization to harsh criticism? What does the specificity of the religion of nature consist in? The main purpose of the article is to present a synthesis of Friedrich Hölderlin's and Emanuele Severino's views on nature and technology, and to analyze the contemporary manifestations of the re-sacralization of nature in many ecological currents, as discussed by Chantal Delsol.

1. Friedrich Hölderlin's Search for Eternal Unity

In 2020, Germany celebrated the Year of Friedrich Hölderlin. More than 650 artistic and intellectual events (exhibitions, lectures, scientific conferences, concerts, etc.) were organized in celebration of the 250th anniversary of the birth of this great poet. The recent undertaking of new scholarly research and analyses of Hölderlin's works may be compared, to an extent, to the renaissance of the works of this thinker and poet that emerged in his homeland after World War I. In the first half of the 20th century, many European intellectuals pursued new philosophical research into Hölderlin's lyrical and narrative poems. The most important commentators on this author included German thinkers Theodor Adorno, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Romano Guardini and Martin Heidegger, and the Hungarian philosopher György Lukács (Brencio 2013; Kobyliński 2020).

In Hölderlin's lyrical and narrative poems, nature, understood as the space in which the sacred resides, plays a special role. In his view, nature is not just a collection of biological or empirical realities. In order for that

which exists to be transformed into nature, it requires the action of the spirit which brings unity into the world and makes life rich, profound, and mysterious, that is, divine. The appreciation of the sacral dimension of nature in Hölderlin's works is the thinker's response to the gradual waning of religion in the modern era in the Western cultural circle. In his poems, the German poet expresses the consciousness of the modern man who has lost his sense of the divine. Hölderlin is painfully longing for the sacred. The heroes of his poetry are not self-sufficient people, but beings dependent on forces that transcend them.

Guardini claims that in order to find the sacred in the age of the death of God, which is a time of extreme spiritual poverty, as "the gods that have fled" are no more, and those who "are to come" are not here yet, Hölderlin discovers the divinity of nature. He understands nature as a "great unity of being" and as a "whole." Nature, which is also sometimes referred to as "the world," becomes a concept present throughout the author's work. For Hölderlin, nature is never limited to being an empirical object of scientific investigation. Nor can it be reduced to the mere sum of objects or living organisms. In this view, nature means the great context in which "each individual being is a part of the whole, and the whole manifests itself in individual form. Everything emerges from a mysterious source and returns to it. For Hölderlin, nature is the ultimate reality. It transcends individual objects with their particular characteristics, transcends the individual endowed with his own nature, and transcends divine powers as well. Everything that can be named is within nature. It is that which is authentic and essential. Nature constitutes the sacred All, beyond which nothing else exists" (Guardini 1939, 179).

According to Jan Czerniecki "Hölderlin believed that the world is one: nature and spirit, Christ and Apollo, present and past, politics and love must be felt and interpreted as parts of a harmonious whole. This unity

is the key to understanding; without it, it is impossible to embrace reality and discern it. His understanding of reality involves two aspects of human life: one is freedom, which is the pursuit of unity with the divine reality, entering harmony; the other is „the most beautiful state that can be achieved" by man, namely that very unity. It is the core of our existence, but we cannot remain in it. Rather, it becomes something we constantly strive for through freedom. This journey to Oneness, as depicted by Hölderlin, involves both the experience of transcendence and the workshop of philosophy – it leads to a kind of mysticism" (Czerniecki 2023).

Idealistic notions of all-encompassing Oneness (Germ. *All-Einheit*) and the pantheistic motto "one and all" (Gr. *hen kai pan*) are the main motif animating Hölderlin's work. He was particularly inspired by Greek thought and the Protestant Pietist spirituality in which he grew up. The fact that beauty, according to Hölderlin, is realized in the process of restoring the original unity of the world is evidenced by the following statement: „Art is the first-born child of human, divine beauty. In it, man-god rejuvenates and renews himself. He wants to feel his own self, so he puts his beauty above himself. This is how man created his gods. For in the beginning, man and his gods were one, since eternal beauty had not yet known itself" (Hölderlin 1976, 359).

Agnieszka Haas argues that art and the poetic mission, according to Hölderlin, is "to restore the lost unity connecting the divine and the human; it is to repeat, to copy, if possible, the act of creation. It should be noted that beauty, as the original state, was not distinguished from Oneness. Art, on the other hand, should strive to return to the lost unity. On the other hand, the beauty that is visible and can be realized in art came about as a result of the lost unity – it is the result of man's separation from his 'gods.' It was not until then that beauty emerged from undifferentiated divinity" (Haas 2023).

Particularly valuable remarks on the sacredness of nature can be found in two works by the German poet: the novel *Hyperion*, published in two volumes between 1797 and 1799, and the drama *The Death of Empedocles*, written between 1797 and 1800 and published posthumously (Hölderlin 1976; Hölderlin 1986).

The nature which Hölderlin refers to in his novel *Hyperion* is a divine reality. It is the “original divinity” that does not undergo change. If nature is divine, then gods no longer exist above it. Gods are only within nature; they dwell in the heart of nature. Gods are the gods of the natural world. Nature, then, is not simply a god, but is more than can be expressed by the word “god” as defined by Hölderlin. The divine nature, as seen by the German poet, is innocent, full of happiness and holiness. It is immortal and knows no sunset, because inherent to it is divine vitality. Death does not touch nature, because it is linked by divine love, and being the sphere of life, it cannot be threatened by any form of destruction.

The fate of the characters in *Hyperion* and other works by Hölderlin depends on the sacral power of nature, especially on how they grow in it. The fate of Hölderlin’s characters depends on whether they become separated from nature or remain united with it. Close relationship with nature is a guarantee of their happiness and success in life. The power of nature is revealed in their lives. On the one hand, nature endows man with what he desires; on the other – thanks to man, nature experiences history and lives its destiny. Nature as the totality of all existing reality finds its individual form in man.

In *The Death of Empedocles*, on the other hand, Hölderlin refers to the historical figure of Empedocles of Agrigento in Sicily, who was a famous ancient poet, philosopher, and healer. Some called him a “demigod.” The work’s main theme is to depict man faced with the mystery of nature. In *The Death of Empedocles* it becomes the direct counterpart of the main character and acquires a subjective character. As

in *Hyperion*, also in *The Death of Empedocles* nature is depicted as one great Whole: beyond it there is nothing, even deities exist within its boundaries. This great Whole refers not to empirical realities, but to the reality of numinosum which can be recognized only in religious experience (Guardini 1939).

The Death of Empedocles depicts the mystery of man faced with the greatness of nature. Nature proves to be a mystery in its greatness, beauty, and power. But there is also the mystery of man dedicated to nature. An individual human being is always subject to the great super-personal powers of the spirit of time and destiny. Man’s historical existence in Hölderlin’s view is also conditioned by the past, that is, the world of the dead, who in the German poet’s vision really seem to return. Despite all the imperfections of freedom, the human individual affirms his freedom within the forces that limit him; he is his own form, relying on himself, shaping his own life, and creating his own works.

2. The Specificity of Technology in the Works of Emanuele Severino

Modern technology has become an extremely effective tool for man’s dominion over the natural world. Today, the human will to power applied to nature leads to its objectification and desacralization. The Italian thinker Emanuele Severino, who conducted his most original research on technology for several decades in the context of the issue of nihilism, stands out among the many authors who engage in the philosophical analysis of the phenomenon of technology (Kobyliński 2014, 78-89).

Nihilism, as seen by Severino, is inseparable from the history of the Western world, which is based on an unshakable belief in becoming, that is, on the idea that everything comes out of nothingness and goes back to it again; that it can become something other than what it is – and that it can ultimately perish. In this context, Severino notes that the modern technological

civilization finds in nihilism its first cause, leading to treating things, susceptible to transformation and manipulation, as if they were nothingness. In his view, the nihilistic nature of all civilizations, nations, religions, and social institutions is related to the belief in the becoming of things. In Western civilization, along with technology, this kind of belief has achieved its highest form, and is accompanied by the conviction that things are nothingness in the sense that they can be derived from nothingness and brought to nothingness, i.e. produced and destroyed. Severino claims that once the task of creating and destroying things belonged to God; in the modern world, this divine prerogative is attributed to technology (Brianese 2014).

At the center of Severino's philosophical system is the idea that all is eternal, not only everyone and everything, but also every moment of life, every feeling, every aspect of reality, and therefore nothing disappears, nothing dies. Not only divinity, nature or the fixed amount of energy in the universe or matter are eternal: every event that takes place is eternal, from the most magnificent to the humblest, from the happiest to the most miserable; every nuance, every moment of the world and soul. In his works, Severino talks about the original violence that wants things to be nothingness in themselves. This violence is at the root of all the violence that has accompanied Western history. Severino claims that this violence dominates the entire planet today. If it is extreme insanity to think that everything passes into and out of nothingness, the destiny of truth is non-insanity, in which the need arises for everything to be eternal (Fontana 2020).

This kind of view of the eternal nature of what exists was propounded in antiquity by the Greek philosopher Parmenides, who claimed that being is and cannot not be, and non-being is not and cannot be. If being (each and all being) cannot be thought of as not being, then being (each and all being) cannot be thought of as becoming,

because by becoming it would not be – that is, it would not exist before its emergence and after its destruction. Thus, the totality of being is unchanging. It does not come from nothingness and does not return to nothingness, because it is eternal. Severino proposes a return to the philosophy of Parmenides because this Greek thinker points to something very important that has been lost in Western history: the eternity of being. Being is eternal, that is, it neither emerges nor disappears. The Italian philosopher argues that by referring to the concept of Parmenides, the sacral dimension of nature can be effectively protected by drawing attention to its eternity and immutability (Severino 2009).

According to Severino, this kind of intellectual attitude is especially needed in our historical era, which has become an era of technology. Today, technology, developed and perfected on the basis of modern science, is no longer a means to achieve man's individual or social goals. Why? Because the power of technology has in fact already become, or has begun to become, an end in itself. Severino claims that technology has the intrinsic ability to increase its own power and rule, its continuous development has become the ultimate global goal to which every other goal is subordinated. This subordination is what the rule of technology in our times consists in.

"Technology," according to Severino, "is today the most powerful form of human salvation. For this very reason, it cannot remain a mere means subordinated to other ends: it is destined to become the ultimate goal, and is consequently doomed – no matter the obstacles – to take its place at the center of global memory and communication, i.e., to place at their center its own salvific character and its own transformation from a means to an end. The main thing technology communicates – by making everything known and preserving everything in global memory – is to convey a basic message regarding its own salvific nature, its own inevitable metamorphosis from a means

to an end, being memory and total communication. Technology communicates its own power” (Severino 1998, 16).

Severino says that modern science and technology allow man to overcome natural limitations and remove various forms of pain and suffering. However, the essence of what they do is not so much to improve the quality of human life, but to create new entities, transform nature and destroy things. Modern science has only provided new and more effective methods of man’s dominion over the world. According to Severino, the forerunner of technology leading to a change in the structure of what exists was Plato, who contrasted *theia technē* (divine technology) with *anthropine technē* (human technology). In the history of Western civilization, there has been a gradual reduction in the scope of divine technology in creating things and transforming the world, and an increase in human technology. Modern technology means replacing God’s absolute creative and productive power with man’s will to power. Severino claims that God is the first author initiating the construction-destruction process, while modern man of the technological age is the last author of producing and destroying things (Pitari 2023).

What is the greatest danger posed by modern technology? Severino stresses that today technology is becoming a force that develops and grows autonomously, with its own unstoppable and dehumanizing dynamics. In its original sense, technology is intended to organize means in order to produce certain ends. The will to create is founded on the belief that things themselves can be produced and destroyed, that is, on the belief that things themselves become different from what they were made of. Based on this sense of becoming, technology guided by modern science aims to take the universe itself as the object of its will to organize means in order to achieve ends. But it should also be noted that the belief in becoming different from what was in the beginning assumes that man himself is technology. Why? Because it is primarily man who wants

to get his will and body ready to achieve what he desires. Which means that what he wants first and foremost is in fact to want. Within the framework of this belief, man thinks of himself as a temporary, ephemeral being, who nevertheless desires to become as powerful as possible (Severino and Petinato 2011).

In this perspective, the destiny of technology, now that it has become the ultimate goal, is to take over the rule of the world. This kind of rule presupposes a planetary memory. For this reason, technology must not allow the forces of tradition to take this memory over. Therefore, the essence of the information-telematic dimension is the belief that control over the world is the destiny of technology, that one of the forms of power exercised by technology is the transmission of information. In this way, all other news becomes mere means subordinated to the hegemony of science, technology, and engineering. Recognition of the continuous becoming of all things is at the same time a negation of objective truth, whose place today is taken by science, technology, and engineering. They become absolute; they no longer serve a purpose but define that purpose themselves (Severino and Boncinelli 2008).

In one of the last interviews before his death, Severino warned against the future misuse of the power of technology by capitalism and Chinese communism (Tomatis 2020, 18). He believed scientific achievements and modern technologies would increasingly become a tool in the hands of various powers that be. Dominion over the world would be assumed by the political system that has enhanced and perfected relevant technoscientific instruments to the greatest degree. They would decide who becomes the most important embodiment of the will to power as the ultimate victor (Kučko 2021).

3. The Modern Religion of Nature According to Chantal Delsol

In October 2021, the French philosopher Chantal Delsol published a book widely discussed in the country on the Seine, entitled *The End of Christianity (La fin de la Chrétienté)*. In 2023, this study has been translated into Polish (Delsol 2023). Delsol believes we are currently experiencing, in France and throughout the Western cultural circle, the emergence of a new religion of nature, which is a modern form of ancient paganism. A new religiosity based on the sacralization and divinization of nature and the environment is replacing the Judeo-Christian tradition which has shaped the Western civilization for two millennia based on cultural premises rooted in the biblical image of the world and man. One such premise is the belief in the existence of truth, which was an important element in ancient Greek philosophy. Another cultural premise in the Judeo-Christian paradigm is the idea of linear time, which has historically given us the idea of progress and scientific and technological development. Yet another element of this paradigm is the belief in the substantive dignity of the human individual.

Delsol argues that the birth of a new religious form that radically challenges the cultural premises of the Judeo-Christian tradition is a kind of return to the mentality typical of pagan times and the dominance of the natural religions of the time (Delsol 2023, 117). A symbolic threshold has been crossed in many Western countries: more than half the population now declare themselves atheist. Inhabitants of Western countries are witnessing the annihilation of the religion of their fathers. The movement that is now exploding in front of our eyes began a long time ago, at least with the philosophers of the 18th century, if not earlier. According to the French thinker, we have entered a new era. But we will not become atheists. Many Christians think of nihilism, nothingness. But they are wrong. No culture lives by nihilism. In their

natural state, all human societies are pagan, polytheistic, dominated by various immanent worldviews. The exception is Jewish and Christian monotheism, with one and transcendent God. When monotheism disappears, societies revert to various forms of paganism (Kobyliński 2016a).

“At the beginning of the 21st century,” Delsol writes, “the most established and most promising philosophical trend is a form of cosmotheism related to the preservation of nature. We may also talk of pantheism or polytheism. Our contemporaries in the West no longer believe in anything beyond this world, in any transcendence. If they imagine another world where they will one day live, it is distant planets accessible by supersonic rockets. The meaning of life must therefore be found in life itself, not outside of it, where there is nothing. The sacred is found here: in the landscapes, in the life of the Earth, and in the people themselves. At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, we changed the paradigm, making a new choice about how to understand the world. An ontological inversion has taken place” (Delsol 2023, 126-127).

What is ontological inversion as understood by the author of *The End of Christianity*? It means a new paradigm of thought, the essence of which is a monistic anthropology similar to the animism of old. This kind of philosophy of man challenges Christian anthropology, which emphasizes the special position of the human person among all living organisms. In the new religion of nature, there is no essential distinction between humans and other living beings, or between humans and all of nature, in which they simply live, without dominating it in any way. Ontological inversion makes the world which man dwells in the sole and ultimate reality, which encompasses the sacred and the profane, questioning the existence of any form of transcendence. A reality shaped by the principle of ontological inversion is a self-sufficient, radically autonomous and immanent world that contains meaning within itself.

Delsol argues that in the Western cultural circle – as a consequence of the dominance of this paradigm of thought – ecology is becoming a religion today, a kind of belief that is religious in nature. “Belief” – not because the current environmental problem cannot be seen as scientifically proven, but because scientific certainty about climate and ecology creates irrational beliefs and certainties, which are in fact religious beliefs having all the characteristics of a religion. According to the French thinker, “ecology has become a liturgy today: the issue may not be passed over in silence, one way or another, in any statement or a part thereof. We have a catechism, too: from kindergarten onward, children are taught and constantly told to acquire good habits in how they think and act. It is a dogma that everyone accepts – whoever questions it, whoever raises the slightest doubt, is considered a lunatic or a villain” (Delsol 2023, 131).

At this point, it should be strongly emphasized that the French philosopher by no means questions the need to protect nature. On the contrary, she clearly states that this problem has been neglected for too long in the industrial era. Delsol rejects an ecology that appeals to the paradigm of ontological inversion, opting firmly for a Christian understanding of the preservation of nature, of which figures such as St. Francis of Assisi or St. Hildegard of Bingen are a beautiful and inspiring example (Delsol 2023, 132). In such a view, nature is considered God’s creation and thus deserving of protection, while the special place of the human person among all living beings is preserved in accordance with the biblical account of the creation of the world and man. In this way, preservation of nature is part of the belief in transcendence and humanism in which human beings occupy a central place. In the Christian view, there is no place for the divinization of nature. When Christianity begins to fade away, however, the sacralization of nature becomes a way to fill the resulting void.

According to the author of *The End of Christianity*, who describes her position as liberal-conservative, Western civilization built on the foundation of Judeo-Christian thought is now in a state of decline due to exhaustion, barbarism, and the destruction of authentic culture. Christianity has used up its time and is now leaving the scene to make room for new religions, for polytheism that worships trees, the earth, or whales. When it comes to France, sixteen centuries of Christianity are coming to an end, and we are witnessing today a normative and philosophical reversal that ushers in a new era. A new historical era is beginning, which will not be atheistic or nihilistic, as many believe, but pagan (Delsol 2023, 124-128).

According to Delsol, the new ecological religion is a form of postmodern pantheism. She believes that the great Pan is making a comeback (Gr. Πάν Πάν, Latin. *Pan, Faun, Faunus*). He is the Greek god of Arcadia who protects forests and fields, watching over shepherds and their flocks. Pan was depicted in the form of half-man and half-animal. Plutarch, the ancient Greek writer and philosopher, claimed that “the great god Pan is dead.” According to Delsol, we need to talk about his comeback today. In these radically changed historical circumstances, Christianity must find another way to survive. It is the way of the simple witness. God’s secret agent (Delsol 2023, 192-204).

The French thinker strongly emphasizes that Western civilization is closely related to Christianity, having been created by the Greeks, Romans, and Judeo-Christianity. For centuries it identified itself with Christianity, and then with the Enlightenment which represents the beginning of the end of Christianity and brutally questions it, taking over many of its characteristics. For the West, the end of Christianity is the beginning of the reign of unconstrained Enlightenment, or unconstrained emancipation. Christianity invented emancipation but put limits to it. Contemporary forms of post-humanism or transhumanism are expressions of emancipation without measure or

law. At this point, we cannot know what will happen to the Enlightenment project without reflecting on the anthropology that was built on the foundation of Christian thought.

It seems that the diagnosis presented in *The End of Christianity* is correct, but with some reservations. Delsol mostly analyzes her own homeland and other countries of Western Europe. Indeed, in the Western cultural circle, the pantheistic religion of nature is now replacing the Judeo-Christian tradition. The French philosopher's diagnosis reflects well the disintegration of Christianity, especially in the country on the Seine, but does not apply to the rest of the world, where we have desecularization, or religious revival. Christianity is growing rapidly in Africa and Asia. We are witnessing a stable and still very strong position of Christian communities in the Americas as well as Australia and Oceania. An increasingly atheistic and pagan Europe is an exception on the religious map of the world (Delsol 2023, 124-136).

It is worth noting at this point that the great upheaval that has shaken the Catholic Church in France in recent years came in the wake of the findings of two national commissions. One analyzed sexual abuse, while the other continues to investigate religious abuse in movements and communities, most often affiliated with charismatic religiosity. The findings of these commissions are dramatic, accelerating the disintegration of the Judeo-Christian tradition in the country on the Seine. Therefore, Delsol is right when she writes that in a sense, what is left today are the ruins of the great spiritual and intellectual tradition of French Catholicism which prevailed in France for sixteen centuries.

A very similar diagnosis regarding the modern religion of nature is presented by the Italian intellectual Giulio Meotti in his book *The Green God. Ecolatry and Apocalyptic Obsessions (Il dio verde. Ecolatria e ossessioni apocalittiche)*, published in November 2021. He believes we are witnessing today the birth of a new environmental

religion, which has become the secular religion of the Western cultural circle. Meotti claims that God did not die but has turned green. This new environmentalism is, in an oxymoronic way, a destructive conservatism: it wants to protect nature, but destroy history and its traces, including civilization. Man is summoned before a tribunal that accuses him of being evil, of being the greatest evil of all living beings on Earth.

The author of *The Green God* believes that the birth of the modern religion of nature can be seen as the next stage in the development of ideologies that appeal to the idea of progress: a transition from communism to ecologism. This is one of the latest global developments: in global imagination, collective salvation has taken on a new meaning. Previously, various myths were created proclaiming the possibility of building a new world and achieving salvation in the immanent dimension. The proponents of Enlightenment thought that salvation would come by science and technology. The totalitarian systems of communism and national socialism of the 20th century were certainly typical salvific projects: they promised man the opportunity to build the Kingdom of God on earth in a secular form (Meotti 2021; Sadowski 2018).

Meotti notes that the modern religion of nature fetishizes anything that can be called natural. Charming evocations of nature permeate both social and mass media *ad nauseam*. The ecological religion has become the new opium of the post-Christian West. The wave of natural superstitious religiosity is becoming an obligatory neoconformism, which serves not only as a passport to surf social networks, but also to win acceptance in society and be able to communicate with neighbors. Some followers of the religion take the nature myth to the extreme, valuing animals and plants more than people. This approach poses a threat to humans not only because of the risk of extinction of the human species in the biological sense, but also because it calls into question the particular dignity

of the human person, fundamentally different from other living beings (Dzwonkowska 2020; Kobyliński 2016b; Sadowski 2023).

Conclusions

The main cognitive contribution of the article is a synthetic presentation of the views of Friedrich Hölderlin, Emanuele Severino and Chantal Delsol on nature in the context of modern technology and the new pantheistic religiosity which places the divine and sacral character of the entire natural world at the center. The analyses performed demonstrate that, on the one hand, nature is currently undergoing profound changes due to science and technology, while on the other – its former sacral character is being restored, forming the foundation of a new form of religiosity. Therefore, it may be said that in man's contemporary approach to nature, the positions developed by Hölderlin and Severino complement each other in a way. Delsol's remarks on the religion of nature, on the other hand, accurately reflect the process of divinization and sacralization of the natural world that we are witnessing today.

The analyses show that in eco-philosophical studies it is worth referring to the works of Hölderlin, Severino and Delsol. Taking the views of these three authors into account may help properly diagnose the changes currently taking place in man's approach to nature. It is particularly important to note two opposing cultural and civilization processes: on the one hand, the increasing domination of man over nature with the help of new technologies, genetic engineering, or artificial intelligence; and on the other, the return of pantheistic religiosity and the presence of divinity in the natural world.

A particularly dangerous threat today is posed by the ontological inversion which questions the unique position of the human person among all living organisms. A reality shaped by the principle of ontological inversion is a self-sufficient, radically autonomous and immanent world that contains meaning within itself. Therefore, within

the framework of eco-philosophical studies, it is necessary to enhance respect for nature and form the right ecological attitudes, while not forgetting the no less important task of defending the specificity of man's being, the substantive dignity of the human person, and the specific identity of the human race in the context of all other living beings.

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