



Neutrality as an Ethical Principle of Social Justice and Human Coexistence

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Abstract: This essay reinterprets neutrality as an ethical principle of social justice and human coexistence rather than as mere political abstention or moral indifference. Starting from the continuity of life across generations and from the fragility that marks human existence, it argues that peace cannot be reduced to the temporary absence of war but must be understood as a durable condition grounded in justice, responsibility, and the protection of human dignity. In this framework, neutrality emerges as an active principle of balance, restraint, and civic orientation, capable of resisting the logics of domination, exclusion, and violence. The article develops a close connection between war, poverty, marginalization, and distorted economic organization. It maintains that conflict is fostered not only by political ambition, propaganda, or competition for resources, but also by the withdrawal of substantial quantities of wealth from the productive circuit. When money remains inert, access to essential goods is restricted, productive activity and employment are compressed, and conditions of exclusion intensify. The essay therefore treats the economic sphere as a decisive site in which ethical responsibility, distributive justice, and the material preconditions of peaceful coexistence are concretely formed or undermined. Taken as a whole, the essay advances both a normative and an economic thesis. Normatively, it argues that lasting peace requires a social order capable of countering exclusion, unproductive accumulation, and distributive imbalance. Economically, it proposes that the quantity of inert money be estimated and that the money supply be rebalanced accordingly, so as to restore conditions more favorable to production, employment, and social stability. In this light, the essay also reconsiders Adam Smith's "invisible hand" ⁱ not as a guarantee of automatic harmony, but as a metaphor for an order that can emerge only when circulation, institutional responsibility, and access to essential goods are adequately secured.

Keywords: neutrality, peace, social justice, economic inequality, social marginalization, human dignity, circulation of wealth.

INTRODUCTION

The idea for this article arises from observing the fruits that a long life can leave behind: not only the attention each person gives to his or her own conditions of existence, but also the value that particularly sensitive minds are able to attribute to the long journey of humanity. I have already recalled the great message of love that, across the centuries, sustains the relationship among human beings. From this perspective, the primordial image of a woman and a man, evoked in Genesis through Adam and Eve, may be read as one of the highest expressions of the creative will to bind together families, generations, and human destinies. It is a circuit of affection, memory, and transmission that accompanies the time of life and safeguards its deepest meaning.

Yet this long circuit does not erase the fragility that accompanies existence. Death separates generations, interrupts passions, strengths, capacities, and knowledge, and compels every age to begin again, at least in part, the patient work of transmission. What one generation without trouble to today's children will have to be safeguarded and renewed once again by those who tomorrow will become adults and then elders. In this sense, human life appears as a continuity always exposed to rupture: an uninterrupted flow of love that passes from spouses to children, and from children to other families, multiplying overtime, yet always under the sign of limit and mortality.

Alongside the life-death pair, however, the history of humanity also knows another decisive dualism: that between war and peace. War means, in a direct sense, the violent anticipation of death, especially for the weakest and least fortunate. Peace, by contrast, is too often reduced to a mere truce, a temporary corridor separating one conflict from the next. Hence an essential question arises: why are populations involved in conflicts unable to express a clear and definitive rejection of war, to the point of bringing down governments that fuel tensions and hostilities? In a democratic state, where the people ought to count, one would naturally expect stronger resistance to the logic that sends individuals fighting against an unknown enemy toward whom, under normal conditions, they would feel no desire for violence.

And yet, in both democratic and authoritarian regimes, popular will is often circumvented. Fear for one's family, the instrumental invocation of patriotism, and propaganda built around economic or strategic interests are all able to bend consciences and conduct. The world is full of conflicts arising from competition for natural wealth, raw materials, oil, and gas, or conflicts disguised in religious and ideological motives. In many areas of the planet, from internal struggles in Africa to the tensions of the Middle East, widespread poverty, the greed of ruling classes, and the manipulation of consent are deeply intertwined. To describe fully the mechanisms by which war imposes itself against the real interests of people is not easy, but it is evident that it rarely coincides with a choice authentically shared by communities.

Nor is it easy to trace the remote origins of this inclination toward conflict. We may hypothesize that, from the earliest ages, selfishness, the desire for power, the will to conquer, and material need have been intertwined. Yet there is one element that deserves particular attention: widespread povertyⁱⁱ. When entire families live in precarious conditions, the risk of life may appear acceptable in exchange for a wage, a uniform, or a possibility of survival. In this sense, war is nourished not only by hatred, but also by misery. Systems of power find soldiers more easily where hunger, unemployment, and marginalization weaken freedom of choice. For this reason, it will be difficult truly to bury the axe of war so long as the world remains marked by extensive and structural poverty.

From this there arises another decisive question. The Earth, by its very nature, possesses resources capable of sustaining life; and yet, in the eyes of millions of human beings, it appears incapable of guaranteeing essential goods. How is this contradiction to be explained? One possible answer is that scarcity depends not only on the limits of nature, but also on the way markets are organized and regulated by the money available. If the production of essential goods is measured not by people's real needs but by the purchasing power of markets, profound distortion results remain intact, but goods do not reach those who need them most.

If, therefore, the production of essential goods is subordinated not to people's real needs but to the purchasing power of markets, a profound fracture arises between what humanity could have and what it actually succeeds in obtaining. It is within this gap that new injustices take root because entire communities remain excluded from access to food, work, care, and security, while elsewhere surpluses, waste, and privileges accumulate. It is precisely this imbalance, even more than natural scarcity, which generates social tensions, forced migration, collective resentment, and, ultimately, fertile ground for conflict. For this reason, restoring an order founded on the just distribution of resources represents not merely an economic choice, but a moral and political necessity for the defiance of peace and for restoring dignity to the rhythm of human life.

At this point a further issue emerges it is not enough to denounce marginality; one must also understand the chain of causes that sustains it. A portion of the wealth produced remains inactive, immobilized in bank deposits, in safe-deposit boxes, or transferred elsewhere so as to be removed from the fiscal and productive circuit. When money comes to a standstill, the concrete possibility of purchasing essential goods, sustaining markets, and responding to the needs of those who live at the margins is reduced. If, by contrast, those resources were to return to circulation, they might at least help alleviate the great necessities of the planet and partly interrupt the sequence that leads from lack of means to social marginality, from marginality to forced or interested enlistment, and from there to war as the extreme outcome of deprivation.

It may therefore be argued that, among the factors that foster social aggressiveness and conflict, there is also the withdrawal of significant quantities of money from the normal economic circuit. If we admit that the Earth is capable of satisfying the essential needs of humanity, we must also recognize that the problem lies not only in the material availability of goods, but in their accessibility and in the circulation of the resources necessary to obtain them. It is not, therefore, the poverty of the Earth that condemns millions of people to the margins, but also the inertia of wealth that remains unproductive and does not participate in the common good. When a sizable portion of potentially circulating money is withdrawn from the economy, an even larger number of human beings risk being driven toward social exclusion.ⁱⁱⁱ

From this perspective, responsibility for social marginality and, ultimately, for many conflicts among people may also be traced to the apathy of those who possess great wealth and leave substantial sums inactive, withdrawing them from the functioning of the economy. The quantity of money in circulation influences the level of productive activity, prices, and opportunities for work. If a substantial share of circulating money disappears, the restraining effect on the economy becomes significant and produces deep social consequences: egoism hardens, resentment and distrust grow, and collective tensions multiply. It is within this framework that the shortage of circulating money deserves to be considered not merely as a technical issue, but as a factor capable of suffocating the economy, narrowing the possibilities of a dignified life, and pushing masses of people toward marginality.

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From this perspective, neutrality does not coincide with indifference but presents itself as an active principle of balance and responsibility, capable of preserving that circuit of love, memory, and continuity that sustains human life in its unfolding. It requires a

conscious use of resources, so that their circulation may not be interrupted by selfishness or unproductive accumulation but may instead contribute to the construction of a social order founded on sharing and transmission across generations. Within this framework, peace cannot be reduced to a mere interval between conflicts but must be understood as a stable condition arising from justice, social cohesion, and the protection of human dignity. Only an organization of collective life oriented toward a balance between needs and resources, between the individual and the community, can guarantee the continuity of human and moral inheritance. In this sense, collective responsibility becomes the foundation of an order capable of rescuing humanity from the spiral of violence and of restoring to the time of life its natural and shared rhythm.

It is not enough, of course, to remain at the level of general principles. What is required, rather, is the identification of a rule capable of restoring the economy to its proper functioning by addressing explicitly the problem of insufficient liquidity and, consequently, that of an economic system constrained by an inadequate money supply in circulation. It has already been observed that such insufficiency also depends on the inertia of significant amounts of money withdrawn from productive and commercial movement, and that precisely these resources ought to be reintroduced into activity. Adequate liquidity enables the economy to approach the highest level compatible with the productive capacity of the Earth, with the full employment of human labor, and with the effective use of the industrial instruments available.

Because money that remains inert in bank deposits does not participate in the economic circuit, it contributes to reducing the natural potential of development, which should instead be proportionate to human needs and, more generally, to life on the planet. From this arises the problem of how to revive the optimum level of economic activity, so as to offer people work, stability, and security, and perhaps durably to dispel the specter of conflict and fratricidal war. Any hypothesis of resorting to force in order to release idle money must be excluded. Rather, one might envisage coordinated action by statistical institutes, with the assent of central banks, aimed at estimating as accurately as possible the quantity of inert money held in banks or elsewhere. That value could then serve as a reference parameter for gradually rebalancing the overall money supply, bringing the economy closer to a standard more nearly aligned with full productive activity, the growth of employment, and the orderly expansion of production.

Within this framework, it becomes essential to recognize that peace depends not only on the absence of weapons, but on the concrete presence of conditions of dignified life. Where work, education, access to essential goods, and trust in institutions are lacking, space opens for resentment, fear, and a willingness to follow logics of opposition. By contrast, a community that invests in social justice, in the balanced distribution of resources, and in the protection of the vulnerable strengthens the moral and civic antibodies against violence. The defense of peace, therefore, requires a politics capable of preventing marginalization and of restoring to every person the concrete perception of belonging to a shared human order.

From this there also arises the duty of a collective responsibility that does not end with denunciation, but is translated into economic, cultural, and institutional choices oriented toward the common good. If human life possesses an original value shared by all, then every social arrangement that produces exclusion, waste, or oppression contradicts that principle and prepares, even indirectly, new forms of conflict. To safeguard the natural

rhythm of life means instead to promote a civilization of measure, solidarity, and foresight, in which progress is measured not by the accumulation of a few, but by the possibility for all to live with dignity. Only within this balance between freedom, justice, and responsibility can an authentic, non-precarious peace take root—one capable of speaking also to future generations.

In concrete terms, once the quantity of money kept inert has been estimated on a global scale, the central banks of different countries could be allowed, within that limit, to issue new money in a corresponding amount. Such new money would retain the same characteristics as ordinary banknotes, differing only by a minimal and uniform sign common to all central banks, without altering either its value or the ordinary functioning of monetary accounting. The statistical parameter should then be updated over time, so as to adjust the level of money in circulation to the changing trend of the share of inert money. Under this approach, the total quantity of money would not be altered arbitrarily; rather, a portion of liquidity withdrawn from the economic circuit would be compensated. Such a measure would also offer holders of great wealth an important guarantee: the objective would not be to produce inflation or deflation, but to maintain the money supply within limits of optimality for the functioning of the economy and the market. In this perspective, the operation would aim to push the productivity of the Earth and human industriousness toward higher levels, gradually reabsorbing masses of marginal workers into the productive circuit. A method of this kind, by ensuring greater economic tranquility for families, might also help contain destructive passions and collective hostilities, which are often fertile ground for conflicts and wars.

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The hypothesis proposed here thus proceeds from the recognition that inert money, withdrawn from the normal circuit of the economy, produces an impoverishment of income, overall production, and employment. Yet one should not fear that the compensatory injection of such liquidity would, in itself, generate monetary imbalances, since its purpose would be to restore equilibrium to the level of money necessary to sustain the highest possible development of production and labor. In other words, there exists a level of circulating liquidity that makes possible the well-being of the human circuit and that corresponds to the quantity of money necessary to attain the highest sustainable degree of production, employment, and tranquility in family life. This is not a secondary matter, but an essential condition for rendering the economy consistent with the real needs of human coexistence. In this light, the reference to the so-called “invisible hand” may be reinterpreted not as a vague or ideological formula, but as a reminder of the existence of an objective order, almost of a law of equilibrium, governing economic relations when resources are placed in a condition to circulate adequately.

In this connection, the reference to Adam Smith deserves careful clarification. In his best-known formulations, Smith suggests that the individual, while pursuing his own interest within a system of regulated liberty, may be as if “guided by an invisible hand” toward outcomes that were not part of his immediate intentions. Yet this image does not authorize a simplistic or fatalistic reading of the market, as though every particular interest were automatically producing the common good. It should rather be understood as a metaphor for the order that may emerge when individual initiative operates within institutional and

moral conditions capable of orienting exchange, restraining abuse, and making possible a non-destructive composition of interests.

It is precisely at this point that the present reflection enters. If money is withdrawn in significant measure from the economic circuit, if wealth becomes immobilized, and if access to goods depends in an unbalanced way on the concentration of resources, then that ordering dynamic evoked by Smith tends to weaken almost to the point of reversing into its opposite. The “invisible hand” cannot function as a principle of harmony when the minimum conditions of circulation, equilibrium, and economic participation are lacking. The spontaneous order of the market presupposes a social fabric not torn apart by radical exclusion and unproductive accumulation; otherwise, instead of promoting the common good, the system risks amplifying inequalities, marginality, and conflict. In this light, the reference to Smith may be reconsidered not as a justification of social inertia, but as an invitation to reconstruct the objective conditions under which economic liberty, distributive justice, and civil peace may once again sustain one another.

Smith observes that large landowners, while pursuing their own interests, nevertheless end up indirectly enabling a portion of the goods necessary for life to reach the poorest, as though guided by an “invisible hand.” In this image, the economic order is linked to a higher form of rationality, almost to a providential design that does not allow the excluded to be wholly abandoned. While the force of this intuition should be acknowledged, it must not be accepted in a naive or automatic sense. The decisive issue concerns the concrete conditions within which the economy operates: if access to essential goods is obstructed by excessive concentrations of wealth, by unproductive hoarding, and by deep social asymmetries, then even the possible equilibrium evoked by Smith begins to fracture. The present reflection therefore seeks to reinterpret the Smithian image in a different light: not as reassurance that spontaneous order is invariably beneficial, but as a reminder of the need to reconstruct the conditions under which economic mechanisms may genuinely serve the common good.

What, in concrete terms, might correspond to this providential factor is not entirely clear. It may be hypothesized, however, that it coincides with a law of equilibrium proper to the human economy: a non-arbitrary rule that does not concern the physical world in the strict sense, but rather the sound development of economic and social relations. Were such a rule to be respected, it could help reduce many of the anomalies that mark our time, beginning with the difficulty of guaranteeing to all the goods essential to life, the spread of anger and social hostility, and even the conflicts that arise when political power is exercised by ruling classes incapable of restraining destructive passions and irresponsible interests^v. From this perspective, the decisive point concerns the quantity and adequacy of money in circulation, the true lifeblood of the economic system. Central banks define the money supply according to reliable technical criteria; nevertheless, a significant share of existing money is held in inert form, in bank deposits, in safe-deposit boxes, or transferred abroad so as to be removed from the fiscal and productive circuit. Although fully satisfactory statistics on the scale of this phenomenon are lacking, it is reasonable to argue that this mass of resources withdrawn from circulation contributes to the compression of production, income, and employment. For this very reason, the issue should not remain at the margins of economic analysis, but deserves far greater attention from economists, statistical institutes, and central banks, particularly in light of the connection linking weak economic

systems, extreme poverty, the insufficiency of essential goods, and social instability on a global scale.

This is certainly not an argument to be concealed; rather, our inquiry concerns the effects of the large amount of inert money left lying idle, which is unfortunately partly responsible for the weakness of economic systems and, consequently, for their inability to produce the essential goods required by all the inhabitants of the Earth.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, neutrality, understood in its highest sense, must not be mistaken either for moral inertia or for the mere suspension of judgment. It presents itself, rather, as a demanding form of responsibility, one that calls upon individuals, institutions, and peoples to withdraw from the logic of permanent antagonism in order to seek more just conditions of coexistence. When peace is conceived only as the temporary absence of war, society remains exposed to the return of violence; when, by contrast, it is grounded in the dignity of the person, in the balanced circulation of resources, in work, and in the protection of the most vulnerable, it can assume the character of a durable construction. In this sense, neutrality becomes an ordering ethical principle: not a retreat, but an active choice of balance, measure, and justice, capable of preserving the human rhythm of life against the destructive pressures of greed, marginalization, and fear.

If the contemporary world truly wishes to free itself from the repetition of conflict, it must recognize that social justice is not a secondary issue, but the primary safeguard of peace. Every form of wealth withdrawn from its social function, every inequality allowed to grow without correction, and every form of poverty treated as inevitable prepares a terrain favorable to resentment and to the rupture of the human bond. For this reason, the task of politics, economics, and culture should consist in reconstructing the conditions for a concrete solidarity among generations and among peoples, restoring centrality not to accumulation, but to life. Only a civilization capable of uniting freedom, responsibility, and the just distribution of the means necessary for existence can make stable peace credible. Neutrality, thus understood, presents itself as a principle of justice and coexistence: a rigorous yet necessary path by which humanity may avoid losing itself in the spiral of violence and may hand on to future generations a world more balanced and more humane.

ENDNOTES

^[i] As evidence of the structural connection between poverty, conflict, and mass displacement, it is sufficient to recall that by the end of 2024 the number of forcibly displaced persons worldwide had risen to approximately 123.2 million, with a particularly marked concentration in countries affected by war, persecution, and institutional fragility. See UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2024*.

^[ii] On the relation between money in circulation, productive activity, and employment, see the classical discussion in Irving Fisher, *The Purchasing Power of Money* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), as well as the later debates on liquidity, aggregate demand, and monetary equilibrium in modern macroeconomic theory. The present essay reconsiders this nexus from the standpoint of social justice and peace.

a) Invisible Hand

The “invisible hand” appears in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759): BUR Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, Milan, 2001, pp. 375-376. In this passage, Smith links the “invisible hand” to a form of Providence: landowners, while acting in their own self-interest, end up indirectly distributing some of the goods necessary for survival to the poorest. Later, in *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith clarifies that this mechanism does not apply in the same way to merchants and manufacturers.

In Book IV of *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith criticizes mercantilism and physiocracy, arguing that artificial interventions in trade, such as limiting imports, do not truly increase collective wealth. According to him, such measures merely shift capital from one use to another without guaranteeing any real benefit for society. He then goes on to argue, in summary, that individuals, by seeking their own interest, tend to invest where capital is closer to hand and more useful to the national economy. Thus, while aiming at personal profit, they indirectly promote production, income, and employment in their own country. (Mondadori, Milan, 1977, Book IV, Ch. II, pp. 442-444)

Critiques

In the twentieth century, John Maynard Keynes challenged the idea that the free play of individual interests is by itself sufficient to guarantee a stable and fair economic equilibrium. According to Keynes, a system left entirely to market self-regulation tends to generate distributive imbalances and recurring crises, making corrective state intervention necessary through economic policy tools typical of mixed economies. The theorem holds only in ideal markets; in real markets, with imperfections and externalities, the “invisible hand” alone does not guarantee efficiency, and public intervention is needed.

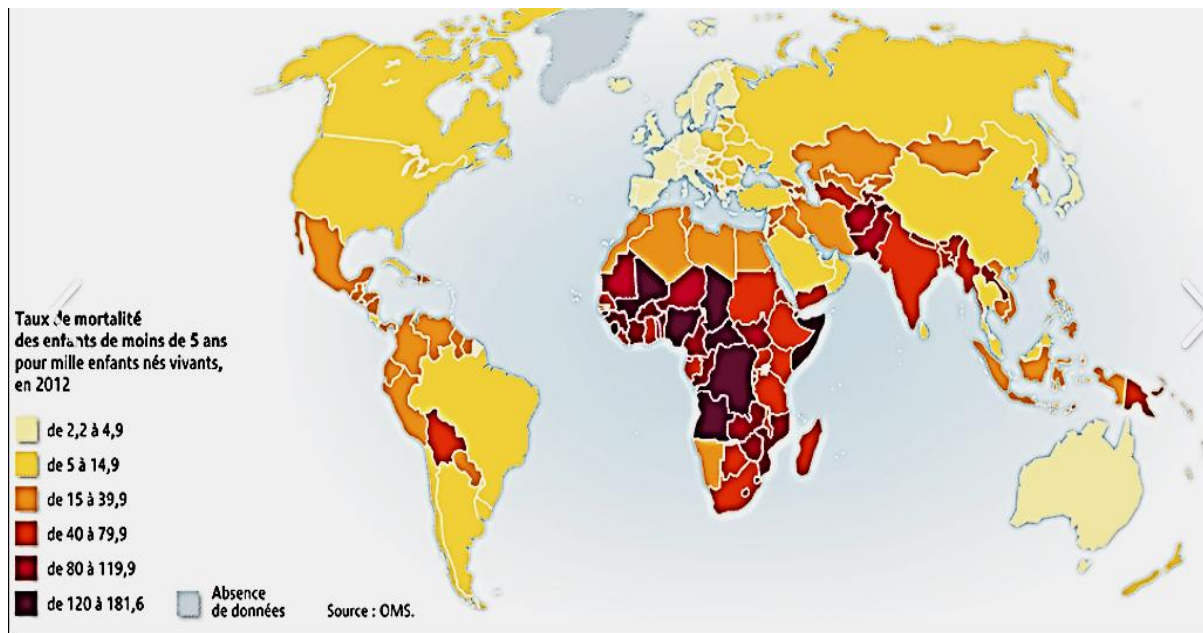
The theorem states that a perfectly competitive market can achieve an efficient equilibrium, but in reality, this condition almost never exists; therefore, the “invisible hand” is not enough on its own and public intervention is often required. The market can be efficient only under ideal conditions that are almost never real; for this reason, as Keynes observed, without public correction the system can produce imbalances and crises.

Source: OMS

b) World Poverty: Official Data

Extreme poverty still affects about 700 million people worldwide, who live on less than 2.15 dollars a day, a threshold insufficient to guarantee essential needs. The phenomenon affects children (about 333 million) and women particularly severely, as they are more exposed because of economic inequalities and unpaid care work. The text distinguishes between extreme poverty, linked to the lack of basic goods, and relative poverty, which measures hardship in relation to the average standard of living in a society. Poverty is widespread especially in many areas of the Global South, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. In recent decades, global poverty has declined, but major obstacles remain, including conflicts, population growth, inequality, and climate change.

If one considers the threshold of 2.15 dollars established by the World Bank and the United Nations, extreme poverty affects very high shares of the population in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa: 78.9% in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 74.5% in Mozambique, 70% in Malawi, 65.6% in the Central African Republic, 64.35% in Zambia, 62% in Burundi, 50% in Niger, and 44.9% in Tanzania.



1. Distribution of Water on Earth

- Total water on the planet amounts to 1.386 billion km³.
- Only 2.8% is fresh water (about 35 million km³).
- Fresh water is almost entirely made up of:
 - ice: 70%
 - groundwater: 29.6%
- Rivers and lakes represent only a minimal share of reserves.

2. Access to Drinking Water

- Some regions lack drinking water because of the excessive costs of infrastructure (piping, transport).
- In poor rural areas, water exists, but there are no facilities to treat and distribute it.
- billion people face difficulties every day in obtaining water.
- Contaminated water is one of the main causes of mortality, especially among children.

3. Activities That Consume the Most Water

- Agriculture: more than three-quarters of the water used by humanity.
- Urban domestic use increases with hygiene standards and standards of living.
- USA: about 500 L/day per person
- Europe: 150-200 L/day
- Large Chinese cities: European levels
- Chinese rural areas and Africa: less than 20 L/day
- Industry: variable consumption.
- Developer countries: significant reductions
- Emerging countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China): high consumption

4. How to Prevent Water Shortages

- Improve the international and local management of resources.
- Each state should define a water policy shared with its citizens.
- Increase development aid to finance efficient irrigation and urban water networks.
- Reduce the costs of desalination and wastewater recycling.

5. Water and Conflicts

- The idea of “water wars” is above all a striking formula.
- History shows both conflicts linked to water and cases in which peoples at war have protected common resources.
- Water retains a sacred character: it has never been used as a weapon through large-scale poisoning.
- All religions attribute to it a central symbolic role

d) A Prudent Estimate

At present, there is no single, globally agreed measurement of the quantity of “inactive” or “sleeping” money in the world’s banks. The notion is, in fact, conceptually ambiguous: bank deposits do not automatically coincide with resources withdrawn from economic development, since they normally constitute a funding base that supports credit, liquidity, and the ordinary functioning of the financial system. For this reason, from an analytical perspective, it is more accurate to distinguish between broad money and total deposits, on the one hand, and excess savings, parked liquidity, or funds that are only weakly employed productively, on the other.

A first useful aggregate is that of global broad money, which includes cash and various forms of deposits. According to World Bank data, the global indicator of broad money (% of GDP) reached, in 2024, a value of around 140% of world GDP. This indicates that the

overall amount of money and deposits in the international system is extremely high; however, this measure cannot be interpreted as an estimate of the share that is actually inactive, since it includes monetary instruments that normally participate in financing and intermediation processes.

Closer to the concept of “parked” resources is the issue of excess savings. The European Central Bank estimated that, between the end of 2019 and the second quarter of 2023, households in the euro area accumulated about €1 trillion in excess savings relative to the pre-pandemic path. The ECB also observed that the saving propensity of euro area households remained elevated thereafter, indicating a persistent preference for liquidity and relatively safe financial assets.

In the case of the United States, the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco monitored the phenomenon of pandemic-era excess savings, showing that their aggregate amount reached exceptionally elevated levels and that the most recent available estimates extend through September 2024. The literature of the Federal Reserve Board further emphasizes that the macroeconomic effect of such resources depends on their distribution across income groups, the speed with which they are spent or invested, and the general conditions of the economy.

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