

**PRELIMINARY PAGES & PREFACE**

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**ECOLOGICAL FAILURE  
OF MODERN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY  
IN THE ANTHROPOCENE**

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**The Modern Atomist Cosmology  
as the Western Deep-Philosophical Root of the  
Modern Technoscientific War against Nature**

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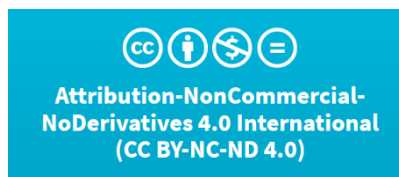
*An eco-social philosophical analysis,  
from within the horizon of the Global Catholic Intellectual Tradition,  
exposing the Modern Atomist Cosmology  
as Desacralizing Mechanical Materialism  
with a bourgeois, hypermasculine, degenerative drive  
misguiding late-modern and elite-male Technoscience  
into global ecological devastation*

**PACEM IN TERRIS PRESS**

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*(Projected for late-2023)*

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*Again, for the late Gibson Winter:  
Anglican priest, sociologist-philosopher-theologian, prophetic thinker,  
my teacher-mentor at the University of Chicago,  
and inspiring friend from whom I learned so much.*

*The spirit of an age becomes wholly clear  
only when it has begun to vanish from the face of the Earth ...  
We now know that the modern world is coming to an end.*

ROMANO GUARDINI  
The End of the Modern World, 1950

*Today cracks and crevices in the modern worldview are widening,  
yet the complex web of assumptions and conditions in which  
modern society's predicaments are embedded is not widely recognized ...  
The deep structure is modernity.*

CHARLENE SPRETNAK  
The Resurgence of the Real, 1999

*The Great Work before us is  
the task of moving modern industrial civilization  
from its present devastating influence on Earth ...  
[to] managing the arduous transition  
from the terminal Cenozoic to the emerging Ecozoic Era.*

THOMAS BERRY  
The Great Work, 1999

*Thomas Berry reminds us  
that the whole burden of modern Earth Spirituality  
is to narrate the story of the human from our Mother the Earth,  
and how significant the title "Mother Earth" is  
for its intimacy, sense of relationality, and mutual care.*

KATHLEEN DEIGNAN  
The Spirituality of the Earth, 2009

*Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain ...  
Our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is,  
can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which  
even now periodically occur in different areas of the world.*

POPE FRANCIS  
Laudato Si', 2015



**OUR SACRED GARDEN PLANET EARTH**

*"The Blue Marble"*

*NASA/Apollo 17 crew; taken by either Harrison Schmitt or Ron Evans*

<https://web.archive.org/web/20160112123725/http://grin.hq.nasa.gov/ABSTRACTS/GPN-2000-001138.html>

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THE MODERN ATOMIST COSMOLOGY  
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*Acknowledgments*

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## PREFACE

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### *The Terminal Crisis of Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization*

Written long ago, the Preface for the 1983 revised edition of my 1980 book SOCIAL ANALYSIS, with contributions by Peter Henriot, stated that "our whole Western Civilization has entered into a profound and irreversible crisis."<sup>1</sup> Today, that crisis includes the globalization of what I now call "Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization."

That Preface also stated that, while creativity in human culture has its source in divine creativity, creativity in this crisis of Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization is collapsing into destruction.

*The deepest source of cultural energies, indeed the deepest source of all human creativity, flows from participation in divine creativity. The creativity of human culture is humanity's participation in the creative Spirit of God, who brooded over the waters in Genesis and still moves within the depths of human civilizations.*

*In the crisis of our present civilization, these energies of creativity are being converted on a massive scale into energies of destruction ... destruction of the poor ... of those who speak for life and justice ... of family and community ... of our precious Earth.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Joe Holland & Peter Henriot, SJ, SOCIAL ANALYSIS: *Linking Faith and Justice* (Orbis Books, 1985), xii.

<sup>2</sup> SOCIAL ANALYSIS, xiii.

In addition, the book claimed that "the classical analyses of the secular Left and the religious Right break down before this cultural crisis of all Industrial Civilization."<sup>3</sup> It then proposed two criteria for reaching beyond this crisis.

*The first criterion is openness to creative transformation of our civilization. The second criterion is openness to the spiritual roots of our creative energies. The secular Left fails the test of the second criterion. The religious Right fails the test of the first criterion ...*

*Both criteria are needed to challenge Industrial Capitalism, and more widely the whole of Industrial Civilization including its extension into Industrial Communism ... Indeed, both Industrial Capitalism and Industrial Communism are entering into negative convergence in the single [ecological,] social, and spiritual crisis of Industrial Civilization.<sup>4</sup>*

### ***Postmodern Ecological Spirituality***

Decades later, my 2017 book POSTMODERN ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY analyzed the correlative breakdown of Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization and Modern Psychological Spirituality. The book then explored *an ecologically-postmodern path of eco-spiritual regeneration.*<sup>5</sup>

Please note that I use the word "postmodern" (literally meaning after the modern) *in an ecological sense* that is opposed to its academic use, which I view as late-modern and nihilist. I see that academic use revealing the late-modern philosophical collapse into the anti-ecological, anti-worker, and elitist-male domination called for by the voluntarist Nihilism of the reactionary 19<sup>th</sup>-Century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). (More on Nietzsche later.)

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<sup>3</sup> SOCIAL ANALYSIS, xiii.

<sup>4</sup> SOCIAL ANALYSIS, xv-xvi.

<sup>5</sup> Joe Holland, POSTMODERN ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY: *Catholic-Christian Hope for the Dawn of a Postmodern Ecological Civilization Rising from within the Spiritual Dark Night of Modern Industrial Civilization* (Pacem in Terris Press, 2017).

Thus, my use of "postmodern" does NOT refer to late-modern academic schools of thought directly or indirectly drawing on Nietzschean Nihilism. Those include Deconstructionism, Post-Structuralism, so-called 'Postmodernism,' and Neoliberalism. Instead, my use refers to what I call the "*Postmodern Ecological Renaissance*," the "*Postmodern Ecological Cosmology*," and a "*Postmodern Ecological Civilization*."

Please also note that I sometimes use the phrase "*integral ecology*." In doing so, I draw on Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical letter on Ecology, LAUDATO SI': *On Care for Our Common Home*.<sup>6</sup> He used integral ecology to signify the intertwining of environmental ecology with human ecology, and with particular concern for people and communities that are poor or in some way vulnerable. To the concept of "integral," my 2017 book POSTMODERN ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY added "spiritual ecology," which has also been under attack within the late-modern integral-ecological devastation.

My 2017 book primarily explored the late-modern spiritual crisis within the Western Catholic-Christian tradition, whose modern bourgeois form tended to reduce spirituality to psychological interiority.<sup>7</sup> Reaching beyond Modern Psychologized Spirituality, the book proposed a postmodern retrieval of *primal indigenous spiritual consciousness*, which celebrates the webs and cycles of Nature as sacred and relational. It also proposed linking this retrieval with the *emerging post-modern eco-spiritual consciousness*, which celebrates our sacred Earth and sacred Cosmos as ecological and evolutionary.

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<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis' encyclical letter is available in its official English version at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.pdf](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> I use the word "bourgeois" here in its original etymological meaning of *urban*, but I also expand it to mean *urbanizing*. That meaning includes the modern bourgeois (*urban*) philosophical alienation from Nature and the modern bourgeois (*urbanizing*) technoscientific drive to dominate and exploit Nature for human utility. Both Liberalism and Marxism are profoundly bourgeois (again, *urban*) ideologies, as well as hypermasculine and degenerative. (I will later explore these characteristics.) The outcome of the modern bourgeois alienation and drive is global ecological devastation.

Further, the book named the Catholic form of that emerging consciousness *Postmodern Catholic-Christian Ecological Spirituality*." It also called for *new lay spiritual movements creating regenerative ecovillages*, which would resonate with the Nature-grounded indigenous eco-spirituality of Keltic Catholic Christianity. That early-medieval Keltic form of Catholic Christianity flourished in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the North of England, and various regions of continental Europe.

Also, I make clear that primal indigenous spiritualities (including the Catholic-Christian Keltic model) and the emerging Postmodern Catholic-Christian Ecological Spirituality are not *pantheist*, meaning Nature is divine. Instead, they are *panentheistic*, meaning the Divine Mystery is self-revealing in and through Nature.

This panentheistic understanding of spirituality has been long present in the Western Catholic celebration of Nature as sacramental and in the Eastern Orthodox celebration of Nature as divinized (*theosis*).

Again, that 2017 book, *POSTMODERN ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY*, critiqued the Western Catholic-Christian spiritual tradition's dominant late-classical, medieval, and (especially) modern forms. And again, it called for retrieving primal indigenous spiritualities' celebration of Nature as sacred and relational. It also pointed toward a postmodern ecological-evolutionary spiritual holism.

### *Cosmological Root of Global Ecological Devastation*

This 2023 book, *THE ECOLOGICAL FAILURE OF MODERN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY IN THE ANTHROPOCENE*, offers *a deep eco-social critique of Western Philosophy's Modern Atomist Cosmology of Desacralizing Mechanical Materialism, impelled by a bourgeois, hypermasculine, degenerative drive*. (The Introduction following this Preface will explain this complex name and description.)

Cosmology signifies the deepest philosophical-scientific understanding of the Cosmos (Universe) and everything in it. Thus, Cosmology provides the deep philosophical-scientific lens through which human societies consciously or subconsciously interpret Nature. Different civilizations and different eras of civilizations have carried different cosmologies. Again, the Modern Cosmology is atomist.

This book proposes that the Modern Atomist Cosmology is foundationally erroneous and constitutes the deep philosophical error that has misguided Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization's wondrous Technoscience into its violent and still-expanding War against Nature.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, on the creative side, the book praises the emerging Postmodern Ecological Renaissance, which is discovering a regenerative Postmodern Ecological Cosmology and pointing toward a regenerative Postmodern Ecological Civilization.

This new and regenerative civilization needs to emerge as a symphony of renewal and communion arising from the ancient civilizations of Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific, and Europe. It also needs to conserve and expand the innumerable and invaluable gifts of our human cultures' primal, classical, and modern legacies.

### *Failure to Stop Global Ecological Devastation*

I have written this new book because contemporary ecological movements, despite their heroic efforts, have failed to stop Modern Industrial Civilization's violent and still-expanding Technoscientific War against Nature. The resulting global ecological devastation is like a slow-motion global nuclear war.

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<sup>8</sup> Technoscience, a modern phenomenon, refers to the practical alliance between Modern Science and Modern Technology, with both misguided by the Modern Atomist Cosmology. Again, Rachel Cason used "War against Nature" throughout THE SILENT SPRING. As noted earlier, I call it the *Modern Technoscientific War against Nature*.

Of course, from the same misguided Technoscience, our planetary biosphere is simultaneously threatened by more rapid global ecological devastation from nuclear war.

One obvious result of the Modern Technoscientific War is the global heating of our garden-planet Earth beyond its pre-industrial levels. The primary cause of that heating is the still-expanding burning of fossil fuels, from which many late-modern global techno-financial super-elites, predominantly male, still criminally profit.<sup>9</sup>

But global heating is only part of global ecological devastation. In his magisterial book *CREATION IN CRISIS*,<sup>10</sup> Joshtrom Isaac Jureethadam has more fully described this devastation as including:

- ***Global Natural Devastation*** – global climate change with its extreme weather events [including extreme cold, extreme heat, and fresh-water flooding], droughts and desertification [plus enormous wildfires], melting of glaciers, sea-level rise, ocean acidification and threats to marine life, species extinction and biodiversity loss, and pollution, waste, and depletion of resources;
- ***Global Social Devastation*** – global threats to food security and health, forced migration for uprooted climate refugees, and increasing [global and national] inequality and injustice;
- ***Global Spiritual Devastation*** – massive denial or forgetfulness of Creation's sacredness and massive ecological sins that reject authentic stewardship.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See Ronald C. Kramer, *CARBON CRIMINALS, CLIMATE CRIMES* (Rutgers University, 2020)

<sup>10</sup> Joshtrom Isaac Jureethadam, *CREATION IN CRISIS: Science, Ethics, Theology* (Orbis Books, 2014). The bulleted points listed above largely reflect his book's Table of Contents. The author is a Catholic priest, university professor of Philosophy, and the Vatican's coordinator of Ecology and Creation.

<sup>11</sup> To the concept of ecological sin as a failure of stewardship, we need to add that it is also an act of rebellion against the Creator. For this deeper understanding of ecological sin, see the ecological teaching of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople in Fr. John Chryssavgis, Ed., *COSMIC GRACE + HUMBLE PRAYER: The Ecological Vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew I* (William B. Erdmans Publishing, 2003).



## *Again, the Deep-Philosophical Root*

Because contemporary ecological movements are failing to stop Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization's still-expanding technoscientific devastation of integral ecology, Philosophy must ask: *What is the deep-philosophical root cause of that devastation?* As mentioned, this book argues it is the *Modern Atomist Cosmology*, embodied in Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization's misguided yet still-expanding technoscientific War Against Nature.

After undermining our human family's primal and classical cosmological legacies over several centuries, the Modern Atomist Cosmology now exercises *intellectual hegemony*. It does so across Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization's competing ideological forms of Industrial Capitalism and Industrial Communism.

But today, few late-modern intellectuals and professionals are aware of its powerful presence. As a result, the Modern Atomist Cosmology now functions like the water fish swim in or the air we humans breathe. Most no longer understand or even perceive it. Yet its subliminal, pervasive, and tenacious intellectual inertia constantly undermines contemporary ecological movements' courageous efforts to stop the Modern Technoscientific War against Nature.

Again, despite those courageous efforts to stop that War, global ecological devastation relentlessly expands. But how does the Modern Atomist Cosmology's intellectual hegemony support the Modern Technoscientific War against Nature?

Of course, we know that, for decades, greedy billionaires have been promoting vicious libertarian expressions of the Modern Atomist Cosmology (albeit without knowing their cosmological name). They strive to protect their anti-ecological fossil-fuel investments and their anti-human concentrations of wealth and power. They do that by funding sophisticated disinformation campaigns and oligarchic-populist political campaigns. But is that the whole explanation?

In this book, I argue that there is a broader *surface-level ideological explanation* and a more profound *deep-level cosmological explanation*. The first provides pervasive but erroneous ideological misguidance for Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization's bourgeois-hypermasculine consciousness. The second provides profound but erroneous philosophical misguidance for Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization's bourgeois-hypermasculine Technoscience. Yet the two are intertwined.

- *The surface-level ideological explanation* is that many late-modern artists, intellectuals, and professionals uncritically accept one or the other of Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization's competing bourgeois ideologies of *Liberalism and Marxism*.

As this book will explore, both Liberalism and Marxism are philosophically grounded in the same Modern Atomist Cosmology, though in different ways. The Social Philosophy of Liberalism, which various forms of Industrial Capitalism embody, is ideologically *individualistic* (fragmented atoms). The Social Philosophy of Marxism, which various forms of Industrial Communism embody, is ideologically *massifying* (solidified atoms).

Of course, both Liberalism and Marxism also carry valuable insights, which we need to preserve and expand – for example, democracy, human rights, and social solidarity. Even so, their shared erroneous cosmological foundation in philosophical Atomism constitutes Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization's foundationally anti-ecological misguide.

Within this misguided civilizational process, many contemporary artists, intellectuals, and professionals remain trapped within the *late-modern bourgeois ideological consciousness*. Their assumption that either Industrial Capitalism or Industrial Communism is normative constitutes the surface-level ideological obstacle undermining ecological movements' courageous efforts to stop global ecological devastation.

- *The deep-level cosmological explanation* is the *Modern Atomist Cosmology's intellectual hegemony*. Again, at that deep-philosophical level, cosmological Atomism undergirds Liberalism's individualism and Marxism's massification. This book explores this deep-level cosmological explanation.

### *The Now-Global Catholic Intellectual Tradition*

In addition, I have written this 2023 book from within the horizon of the still-developing *Global Catholic Intellectual Tradition*, with its ethical core of *Catholic Social Teaching*.<sup>12</sup> (I now sometimes rename this core as "Catholic Eco-Social Teaching.") Though the Global Catholic Intellectual Tradition is only one of our human family's rich wisdom traditions, it remains *my home tradition*.

Although this is not a theological book but a philosophical one, I mention the Global Catholic Intellectual Tradition for two reasons.

- *Intellectual Context*. First, the Catholic Intellectual Tradition has always correlated philosophical and theological reflection (and, more broadly, faith and reason). Thus, its theological background contextualizes my philosophical reflection.
- *Primary Audience*. Second, I have primarily written this book for readers within the Global Catholic Intellectual Tradition, though I hope it will also interest readers from other intellectual traditions.

(We all consciously or unconsciously do our thinking from within one or more intellectual traditions, even if we are unaware of that intellectual influence. Again, the two dominant modern intellectual traditions are Liberalism and Marxism, in their various forms. As noted, both have deep but misleading-philosophical roots in the same Modern Atomist Cosmology.)

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<sup>12</sup> For more on the Global Catholic Intellectual Tradition, see Appendix 2 at the end of the following Introduction.

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition's Modern Catholic Social Teaching, articulated in positive form through papal encyclical letters from 1878 to 1958, rejected Marxism and called for social and philosophical reform of Liberalism.<sup>13</sup> However, it argued that social reform would not succeed, in the long term, without philosophical reform.

Yet, by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, it became clear that the call for philosophical reform of Liberalism had failed. As a result, later in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the earlier 20<sup>th</sup>-Century social reform of Liberalism began to collapse into the globalizing Libertarianism called Neoliberalism.<sup>14</sup>

I call the current papal strategy, which began in 1958, "Postmodern Catholic Social Teaching" (again, using "postmodern" in an ecological sense). It has been learning from Liberalism and Marxism yet reaching socially and philosophically beyond those two anti-ecological systems. Postmodern Catholic Social Teaching now calls for a new humanist-ecological global civilization.<sup>15</sup>

Before the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the Catholic Intellectual Tradition was often Eurocentric, patriarchal, and misogynist. It also often explicitly or implicitly accepted modern racism and colonialism. Now, however, the Catholic Intellectual Tradition has become fully *global*.

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<sup>13</sup> See Joe Holland, MODERN CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: *The Popes Confront the Industrial Age 1740-1958* (Paulist Press, 2003). Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) was the founder of Modern Catholic Social Teaching. An earlier anti-modern strategy, running from 1740 to 1978, preceded the Leonine strategy for Modern Catholic Social Teaching.

<sup>14</sup> See Cambridge University professor Gary Gerstle's insightful analysis, THE RISE AND FALL OF THE NEOLIBERAL ORDER (Oxford University Press, 2022). However, the Neoliberal Order's triumph proved short-lived, soon yielding to proto-fascist attacks by the New Right.

<sup>15</sup> For the launching of this new strategy for Catholic Social Teaching, see Joe Holland, SUMMARY & COMMENTARY FOR PACEM IN TERRIS: *The Famous Encyclical Letter of Pope John XXIII on World Peace*, Revised Edition (Pacem in Terris Press, 2020). John XXIII (1958-1963) was the founder of what I call "Postmodern Catholic Social Teaching." (Again, I use "postmodern" in a humanistic-ecological sense, and not in the typically academic nihilistic sense.) For its fullest ecological expression, see again Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical letter on ecology, LAUDATO SI' – *On Care for our Common Home*.

As a result, it is increasingly gifted with creative thinkers from indigenous wisdom traditions and the additional wisdom of women, peoples of color, and non-Western civilizations across Africa, Asia-Pacific, the Americas, and Europe. Also, new generations of Catholic scholars and activists (again, often female, indigenous, and melanin-richer) are healing many of the tradition's past weaknesses.

Further, we need to remember that, during the high-medieval period, the Catholic Church launched the Western university system. The first Western universities arose in places like Bologna, Naples, Paris, and Prague, as well in Oxford and Paris – all out of Catholic intellectual-spiritual inspiration. Today, well over a thousand Catholic universities and schools of higher education span our home planet Earth. The Catholic university system has also become global.

Further, the still-growing majority of Catholic Christians (and of all Christians) now dwell in the Global South. With this new human enrichment, the Global Catholic Intellectual Tradition is integrating its global scholarship with grass-roots action for a new and transformative global praxis that is societal and ecclesial.<sup>16</sup>

Again, at the deep-philosophical level, the Global Catholic Intellectual Tradition's core of Catholic Social Teaching has foundationally criticized the two modern intellectual traditions of Liberalism and Marxism. Yet, it has also embraced many of their gifts, especially democracy, human rights, and social solidarity, although without accepting Liberalism and Marxism's foundational Modern Atomist Cosmology. Thus, the Global Catholic Intellectual Tradition constitutes a distinct but dialogical stream of social-philosophical thought, yet one also learning from valid insights within Liberalism and Marxism.

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<sup>16</sup> I regret that, due to now-advanced age, my activist and scholarly formations primarily took shape before these younger generations began to make their contributions. So I must apologize for still mainly drawing in this book on older Western and often masculine sources. Yet I rejoice that new generations of activists and scholars across the globe are rapidly broadening the Catholic Intellectual Tradition.

One major contrast with the modern intellectual traditions of Liberalism and Marxism is that the Catholic Intellectual Tradition conserved the foundational insight of *Aristotle* (384-322 BC), who taught that Nature is organic (including human nature and human society).<sup>17</sup>

The first major Catholic turn to Aristotle occurred during the High-Medieval Aristotelean Renaissance, which began with Islamic, Jewish, and Catholic philosophers in the South of today's Spain. From there, it continued to develop, next in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century School of Salamanca in today's Spain, and later in the late-19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century development of Modern Catholic Social Teaching. Now, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, prophetic figures in the tradition are engaging with evolutionary ecology, including at the cosmic level.

In contrast, early-modern European "natural philosophers" (again, philosophers and scientists) rejected Aristotle's interpretation of Nature as organic. The most polemical rejection of Aristotle came from the English lawyer, politician, and philosopher Francis Bacon (1561-1626), who is still considered the visionary prophet of Modern Science.

As this book will soon explore, those early-modern natural philosophers instead chose for their cosmological grounding the anti-religious Philosophy of materialist Atomism, taught by the classical Greek philosopher *Epicurus* (341-270 BC).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Of course, Aristotle's Natural Philosophy (his *Physics*) and Social Philosophy (his *Politics*) contained major errors. Early-modern *Physics* exposed and rejected his errors in Natural Philosophy, but several errors in his Social Philosophy survived long into the Modern Era. For example, Aristotle wrongly held that people living in rural tribes, which did not build cities, were sub-rational and could be enslaved by 'fully rational' and 'civilized' elite-males. He also held that women, even in 'civilized' societies, were sub-rational and needed to be dominated by 'fully rational' male husbands. Modern apologies for slavery, racism, and sexism often used those erroneous opinions of Aristotle to justify modern slavery, racism, and sexism. But those were errors in Aristotle's *application* of his organic Nature-based philosophical method. His nature-based organic method, I maintain, can survive the correction of those serious errors in application.

<sup>18</sup> On the early-modern retrieval and revision of Epicurus' philosophical Atomism for the cosmological foundation of Modern Philosophy and Modern Science, see philosopher

Yet, while embracing Epicurus' Physics of Atomism, those early-modern natural philosophers rejected Epicurus' quietist Ethics, which was one of gentle tranquility (*ataraxia* in Greek). Instead, they substituted their bourgeois-hypermasculine and anti-ecological ethics. But Epicurus would have vehemently opposed that modern bourgeois-hypermasculine revision of his ancient Philosophy.

Also, to protect religion, Descartes (1596-1650), the 'father' of Modern Western Philosophy, schizophrenically attempted to combine Epicurean Materialism with Platonic Spiritualism. Over time, however, later generations of Western intellectual elite-males rejected Platonic Spiritualism and reduced the Modern Atomist Cosmology to what Whitehead (1861-1947) called the doctrine of Scientific Materialism.

Again, in contrast to the Epicurean-atomist cosmological grounding of Modern Philosophy and Science, the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, beginning in the high-medieval period, has continued to embrace Aristotle's foundationally organic understanding of Nature.

- ***Saint Thomas Aquinas***. During Christianity's first millennium, its primary philosophical resource was Neo-Platonism. However, during the high-medieval period, the Catholic philosopher-theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) 'canonized' Aristotle for the Catholic Intellectual Tradition.

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Catherine Wilson's brilliant 2008 study, *EPICUREANISM AT THE ORIGINS OF MODERNITY* (Reprint Edition, Oxford University Press, 2010). However, that early-modern retrieval of Epicureanism came from the classical Roman Epicurean philosopher and poet Lucretius (Titus Lucretius Carus, c. 99-55 BC). On the eve of the Modern Era, during the European Renaissance, a papal book-hunter rediscovered in an old German monastery Lucretius' long-lost book *DE RERUM NATURA* (On the Nature of Things). That text lyrically explained Epicurus' materialist Philosophy of Atomism. A century later, Epicurus' Atomism, in revised form, began to function as a key philosophical resource for what would become the Modern Philosophical-Scientific Revolution. On that development, see the widely-praised book by the Harvard Shakespeare scholar Stephen Goldblatt, *THE SWERVE: How the World Became Modern* (W.W. Norton, 2011). The "swerve" in Goldblatt's title refers to Epicurus' teaching that all atoms spontaneously "swerve" as they move within a cosmic vortex.

- ***The School of Salamanca.*** Much later, during the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and faced with the Spanish *Conquista* in the Americas, the early-modern Spanish philosophical-theological school of Salamanca further developed Aquinas' Aristotelean-rooted Social Ethics.
- ***Pope Leo XIII.*** Again, centuries later, time beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Leo (elected in 1878) launched a new strategy often called "Modern Catholic Social Teaching." He proclaimed St. Thomas Aquinas' retrieval and revision of Aristotle's Philosophy as preeminent and mandated its teaching in Catholic universities.<sup>19</sup> He also used Thomistic Philosophy to condemn Socialism and to propose a philosophical-social reform of Capitalism.
- ***Pope John XXIII.*** Early in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, John (elected in 1958) launched the new stage that I name "Postmodern Catholic Social Teaching." John called for a new global "social order" based on the organic order of Nature – in effect, a new global civilization beyond Liberal Capitalism and Scientific Socialism and based on cooperative human ecology. His successors all contributed to this new strategy, but it was Pope Francis (elected in 2013) who brought it to full ecological expression. In addition, John described this new civilization not as formally "Christian" (there are many religions worldwide) but as truly "human."

Thus today, as we enter the ecological Postmodern Era, a new global form of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition has been emerging, and one still rooted in the Aristotelean organic understanding of Nature, including human nature and human society. *This time, however, it embraces evolution and defends ecology, and it portrays both within an organic framework.* This new strategy is also now dialoguing with and learning from non-Western, post-patriarchal, post-colonial, and anti-racist thought and action.

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<sup>19</sup> See Leo's 1979 encyclical letter *ATERNI PATRIS* (of the Eternal Father), subtitled "On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy." That document became foundational for the modern form of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.



For this now-global and still-developing postmodern and ecological-evolutionary stage of Catholic Intellectual Tradition, I propose that Aristotle's foundational interpretation of Nature as organic, including its organic understanding of the human person and human society as natural, provides valuable philosophical support for an integral ecology.

### *Summary*

In this Preface, I have identified the following claims as central to this book's explorations.

- ***Terminal Ecological Crisis of Civilization.*** Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization includes the competing social-philosophical systems of Liberalism and Marxism, embodied respectively in Industrial Capitalism and Industrial Communism. Both ideological systems are now breaking down in global ecological devastation.
- ***Anti-ecological Cosmology.*** The Modern Atomist Cosmology arose from the early-modern retrieval and revision of Epicurus' anti-religious materialist Philosophy of Atomism. I describe it more fully as a Desacralizing Mechanical Materialism with a bourgeois-hypermasculine and degenerative drive. It constitutes the cosmological foundation of Liberalism and Marxism. Its root error has misguided both forms of Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization's still-expanding Technoscientific War against Nature.
- ***An Ecologically Regenerative Path.*** An emerging Postmodern Ecological Renaissance is now developing a regenerative Postmodern Ecological Cosmology and seeking a regenerative Postmodern Ecological Civilization. This is our basis of hope for the future, though the timeframe for transition is growing short.
- ***Home Intellectual Tradition.*** The Global Catholic Intellectual Tradition, with its Western Aristotelian-Thomistic heritage and correction and enrichment from new global sources, is my home tradition. Though only one of our human family's rich wisdom tradi-

tions, it provides the intellectual context for this book. For over half a century, this tradition's new papal social teaching has moved beyond the competing modern ideological frameworks of Liberalism and Marxism. I interpret it as calling for a new ecological-humanistic global civilization.

- ***Ecological Failure of Modern Western Philosophy.*** Finally, I argue that Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization's still-expanding global ecological devastation reveals *the ecological failure of Modern Western Philosophy*. That failure occurs within what this book's Introduction will next explain is the "Anthropocene Epoch" within our home planet Earth's long geological history.

Of course, the question arises of what, at the deep-philosophical level, constitutes the regenerative Postmodern Ecological Cosmology. I will briefly address this question in the final chapter of this book. But a more extensive answer would require another book.

Again, the primary purpose of this book is *to critique Modern Western Philosophy at its cosmological foundation of Atomism*. Again, that is the deep philosophical grounding for Modern Industrial-Colonial civilization's two dominant social philosophies of Liberalism and Marxism, embodied in Industrial Capitalism and Industrial Communism.

And again, I offer this critique because Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization's competing ideologies of Industrial Capitalism and Industrial Communism still undermine the courageous efforts of ecological movements. Further, Modern Industrial-Colonial Civilization's Technoscientific War against Nature is catastrophically expanding global ecological devastation in terms of natural ecology and, within it, human ecology.

