

OCCASIONAL PAPER



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THE LONG DARK WINTER'S NIGHT

A Time for Healing the Spiritual Disease of Religious Fascism

***At the end of the Modern World with its anti-ecological Industrial Civilization,
our global human family needs to grow regenerative Eco-Social Populist Movements
that will draw eco-social spiritual inspiration from our family's wisdom traditions,
support fresh leadership from youth, rural folks, and the working class,
and sow creative seeds for a Postmodern Ecological Civilization***

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PART ONE

THE LONG DARK WINTER'S NIGHT OF THE MODERN WORLD'S Industrial Civilization is now beginning, and it is threatening our ecological, social, and spiritual life. The 20th-century Italian-German Catholic philosopher Romano Guardini experienced its early dusk and named it "**The End of the Modern World.**"¹ Now, in the 21st century, its full darkness reveals the Modern World's collapse into what the 20th Century French Catholic philosopher Emmanuel Mounier called **the spiritual disease of Religious Fascism.**²

The start of this long dark Winter's night is a dangerous time because, in various regions of the globe, the **New Right** has been using the darkness to gain power for its Religious Fascism. In this darkness, it has masqueraded itself in distorted Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, or other religious forms. But, behind the mask is Religious Fascism's hyper-nationalist idolatry and its compulsion to pursue violent works of evil.

Often funded by billionaires from fossil-fuel, hi-tech, and finance industries, the New Right's Religious Fascism has been gaining power in part by exploiting Liberalism's and the New Left's failed attempt to impose **secularization** on society.³

In the Western 'advanced' industrialized countries, many elitist urban intellectuals and activists have followed the secularizing English Philosophy of Liberalism into its current phase of exploitive **Neoliberalism**, which protects giant corporations while sacrificing the future of youth, rural folk, and the working classes.⁴

¹ See Romano Guardini, *DAS ENDE DER NEUZEIT* (Auflage, 1950), translated into English as *THE END OF THE MODERN WORLD* (Sheed & Ward, 1956).

² Fascism began in Europe during the 1930s, and only World War II defeated it. at great social and ecological cost. In the second half of the 20th century, it appeared in the Global South through backing by powerful nations of the Global North. Now, it is returning to Europe and North America. On its US history, see Gavriel Rosenfeld and Janet Ward, *FASCISM IN AMERICA: PAST AND PRESENT* (Cambridge University Press, 2023). Emmanuel Mounier defined Fascism as a spiritual disease. See his *LE PERSONALISME* (Les Presses universitaires de France, 1949), Pages 101-105, translated into English as *PERSONALISM* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1952), Pages 98-102. For more on Mounier's analysis of Fascism, see Joe Holland, "Emmanuel Mounier & Personalism," Occasional Paper, Pacem in Terris Center for Catholic Social Teaching, available on request from office@paceminterris.net.

³ On certain intellectual elites' drive for secularization in the United States, see sociologist Christian Smith, Editor, *THE SECULAR REVOLUTION: POWER, INTERESTS, AND CONFLICT IN THE SECULARIZATION OF AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE* (University of California Press, 2003).

⁴ See George Monbiot & Peter Hutchinson, *INVISIBLE DOCTRINE: THE SECRET HISTORY OF NEOLIBERALISM* (Crown, 2024)

Other elitist urban intellectuals and activists, this time from the New Left, have followed the secularizing German philosophy of the Frankfurt School's Neo-Marxist Critical Theory. Then, combining German Critical Theory with French nihilist Deconstructionism, they have intensified the competitive fragmentation of **Identity Politics**, which undermine broad working-class solidarity.

Overall, those sterile late-modern philosophical paths have pushed the Modern World's anti-spiritual secularization to a critical point. At the same time, they have culturally uprooted many Liberals and New Leftists from our human family's spiritual wisdom traditions and from the traditional cultures of **the populist majority**.

Further, some secularizing elitists in Liberal entertainment media have ridiculed the populist majority as ignorant and backward. But such **elitist cultural arrogance** has too often blinded secularizing Liberals and New Leftists to the sufferings, class struggles, and creativity of the populist majority.⁵

The populist majority includes youth, rural folks, and the working class, most of whom remain spiritually oriented and seek guidance from **spiritual wisdom traditions**. Understandably, therefore, this majority has reacted against elitists' cultural arrogance with its own powerful backlash of **populist cultural resentment**.

Meanwhile, the New Right has exploited this angry populist resentment by stirring up **culture wars**.⁶ With many Liberal and New Left urban elites abandoning and ridiculing the populist majority and its spiritual wisdom traditions, the New Right has promised to defend the populist majority's rooted identity and spiritual wisdom traditions.

⁵ Many people wrongly believe that Karl Marx invented the analysis of class conflict. In fact, Marx once said that he learned about class conflict from aristocratic Catholic thinkers (perhaps like

Also, Pope John Paul II, as the young Polish philosopher and professor Karol Wojtyla teaching Social Ethics, praised Marxism's analysis of class conflict while, of course, rejecting its atheistic Materialism.

In addition, more than two thousand years before Marx, Plato and Aristotle wrote extensively about class conflict, and so have the Jewish and Christian Scriptures (initially and most powerfully with the Exodus story), as have the sacred scriptures and oral traditions of many other eco-social spiritual streams.

⁶ On still-deeper roots of the contemporary culture wars in the United States' "hybrid Enlightenment," see the leading US cultural sociologist James Davidson Hunter's **DEMOCRACY AND SOLIDARITY: ON THE CULTURE ROOTS OF AMERICA'S POLITICAL CRISIS** (Yale University Press, 2024).

But, of course, that is a lie. What the New Right's Religious Fascism actually brings is **hyper-nationalist idolatry and evil works**. Those evil works are already causing great ecological, social, and spiritual harm to our loving Creator's beloved creatures across our home planet Earth, including our own human species. Thus, as the New Right grows stronger, the Modern World's long Winter's night grows darker, under the morbid mantle of Religious Fascism.

PART TWO

IN RESPONSE TO THE START OF THIS LONG DARK WINTER'S NIGHT, aggravated by failed Liberal / New-Left secularization and darkened more by the New Right's reaction of Religious Fascism, concerned people across the globe need to reform existing democratic movements, or create new ones, in a way that will be authentically populist and ecological.

These democratic eco-social populist movements can become **authentically populist**:

- By drinking from the living waters of our human family's spiritual wisdom traditions
- By rooting themselves in the suffering, class struggles, and creativity of youth, rural folks, and the working class in all their diversities – in effect, becoming spiritually inspired, youth-oriented, and diversity-welcoming farm and labor movements.

In addition, these movements need to become **authentically ecological** because the global ecological crisis now constitutes our most dangerous social threat.

So severe has the modern techno-scientific attack on Earth's planetary Biosphere become that other social causes, important as they remain, can now seem secondary to attacks on the survival of human civilization and our human species.

Yet, to stop this techno-scientific attack, we need to weave together ecological and social movements into what the Catholic Pope Francis called "**Integral Ecology**."⁷

⁷ Pope Francis, LAUDATO SI' – ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME, Chapter Four on Integral Ecology, especially Chapter Four titled Integral Ecology: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

These democratic eco-social populist movements also need to support **regenerative leadership** among youth, rural folks, and the working class. This new leadership needs to create bonds of solidarity across our human family's ethnic cultures, throughout both sexes and diverse genders, and within extended families, religious networks, and locally rooted communities.

Again, confronting both failed Liberal / New Left secularization and threatening New Right Religious Fascism, these movements need to become politically democratic, socially populist, ecologically regenerative, and spiritually inspired. They also need to weave together the ecological, social, and spiritual struggles of youth, rural folks, and the working class into the common struggle for Integral Ecology.

PART THREE

TO GROW A GLOBAL NETWORK OF ECO-SOCIAL SOLIDARITY within this long dark Winter's night, and thereby resist the New Right's spiritual disease of Religious Fascism, these democratic eco-social populist movements need to pursue a wide range of ecological, social, and spiritual mandates. They include, for example, to:

- **Form vibrant global networks of ecological, social, and spiritual solidarity** among democratic eco-social populist movements across our human family.
- **Root themselves demographically** in the suffering, class struggles, and creativity of youth, rural folks, and the working class, across all their diversities.
- **Support the emergence of regenerative leaders** from youth, rural folks, and the working class. *(The old "establishment" of contemporary Industrial Civilization has proved incapable of guiding our human family toward fully ecological pathways.)*

- **Support families among youth, rural folk, and the working class**, and especially extended families,⁸ because young, rural, and working-class families have been under extreme stress from the economic injustices of elitist Neoliberal policies.⁹

(Most young, rural, and working-class parents lack the financial resources that established upper-middle-class university-educated parents have for dealing with increasing costs of housing, medical care, and food, as well as educational problems, drug and alcohol abuse, depression, and other psychological and social problems.)

- **Be comprehensively diverse by welcoming and supporting everyone** in our human family, including girls and women, boys and men,¹⁰ and people of all beliefs, ethnicities, colors, and genders, and by promoting post-patriarchal partnerships between women and men.¹¹
- **Invite upper middle-class university-educated elites to escape** from decadent bubbles of liberal comfort and social blindness by joining in solidarity with the sufferings, class struggles, and creative energies of youth, rural folks, and the working class in all their diversities.¹²
- **Join in alliance with existing social movements across the globe**, like civil rights movements, environmental movements, labor movements, religious movements, and other social movements, all of which carry enormous experience and have extensive networks of grassroots people.
- **Especially support labor movements across the globe**, which for decades have been targets of neoliberal attacks by corporate and political elites, but which are still

⁸ On nuclear and extended families, see David Brooks, "The Nuclear Family Was a Mistake," THE ATLANTIC, March 2020. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/03/the-nuclear-family-was-a-mistake/605536>

⁹ See Stephanie Coontz, "The New Instability," NEW YORK TIMES, 2014-07-27. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/27/opinion/sunday/the-new-instability.html>

¹⁰ Scholars have noted how Fascism especially attracts young males. On the much-needed support for boys and men, see the important study by the Brookings Institution scholar Richard Reeves, OF BOYS AND MEN (Brookings Institution Press, 2022)

¹¹ On this new post-patriarchal partnership model, see Riane Eiler, THE CHALICE AND THE BLADE: OUR HISTORY, OUR FUTURE (Harper & Row, 1988)

¹² See Richard Reeves, DREAM HORDERS: HOW THE AMERICAN UPPER MIDDLE CLASS IS LEAVING EVERYONE ELSE IN THE DUST ... (Brookings Institutions Press, 2017).

fighting against the economic devastation still being inflicted on youth, rural folks, and the working class by elitist, anti-social, and anti-ecological policies.¹³

- ***Expand the urban and rural job-creating movement of eco-social cooperatives*** since the late-modern electronic-industrial economies of Capitalism and Communism cannot generate enough jobs to support most individuals and families across the globe, nor can they create ecologically regenerative pathways. *(Religious organizations, labor organizations, and other social movements could all play creative roles in expanding the eco-social coop movement.*¹⁴)
- ***Define integral ecology as foundational for the transition*** from our collapsing Industrial Civilization toward a regenerative Ecological Civilization ensuring human survival within sustainable ecosystems.
- ***Make their long-term mission to guide our human family*** through the confusing, turbulent, and dangerous transition toward the future and regenerative Ecological Civilization.¹⁵
- ***Work to strengthen global governance*** according to the Earth Charter's fundamental principles of 1) Respect and Care for the Community of Life, 2) Ecological Integrity, 3) Social and Economic Justice, 4) Democracy, Non-Violence, and Peace.¹⁶ *(Created from intensive global dialogue, the Earth Charter is the most important soft-law document for guiding the future expansion of our human family's global governance.)*
- ***Fight against what Elizabeth Kolbert has called the "Sixth Great Extinction"*** of Earth life, which is being rapidly killed by what Rachel Carson many decades ago called the

¹³ See Jeremy Brecher, THE GREEN NEW DEAL FROM BELOW (University of Illinois Press, 2024).

¹⁴ One large example of social cooperatives is the famous Mondragon Corporation in the Basque region of Spain, created in response to youth unemployment after the Spanish Civil War and World War II and started by a parish priest drawing on Catholic Social Teaching. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mondragon_Corporation.

¹⁵ Note that the term "postmodern" is not used here according to its typical academic meaning as found in Post-Structuralism or Deconstructionism, both of which are only late modern or hyper-modern. Instead, it refers here to regenerative postmodern ecological pathways. On this civilizational transition, see Joe Holland, POST-MODERN ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY (Pacem in Terris Press, 2017), Chapter 7, titled "Great Postmodern Ecological Transformation."

¹⁶ See <https://earthcharter.org> See also Elisabeth M. Ferrero & Joe Holland, "THE EARTH CHARTER" - A STUDY BOOK OF REFLECTION FOR ACTION, Electronic Reprint Edition (Pacem in Terris Press, 2023, available at: <https://spirituality-sustainability.net/books>

“War against Nature,” the modern techno-scientific war waged by both capitalist and communist economies.¹⁷ (Way back in Europe’s 17th century, early modern male elites, who philosophically established the modern paradigm for Techno-Science, personified Nature as a female enemy for male scientists to conquer and dominate.¹⁸ They also tried to strip Nature of any sacred dimension. The result today is the “Sixth Extinction” of Earth Life, which also threatens Human Life.)

- ***Begin to regenerate our loving Creator's wounded Earth life*, including human life, across its interwoven ecological, social, and spiritual fabric through rural and urban Regenerative Agriculture.¹⁹**
- ***Resist the New Right's campaign of fear and hate* that awakens demons of antisemitism, Islamophobia, misogyny, and various forms of sexism and racism (including against immigrants), that foments attacks on gender minorities, and that seeks revenge against political ‘enemies.’**
- ***Understand that the New Right's Religious Fascism draws its negative energy* of fear and hate from a deformed and perhaps demonic spirituality that feeds on Liberal and New Left secularization.**
- ***Understand that the New Right's Religious Fascism will protect* the rich and powerful, inflict pain and suffering on youth, rural folks, and the working class, and may develop brutal programs of repression.**
- ***Also understand that the New Right's Religious Fascism is intensifying* the modern techno-scientific attack on Earth Life, including Human Life, both of whom are our loving Creator's precious creatures.**

¹⁷ See Elizabeth Kolbert, *THE SIXTH EXTINCTION*, Reprint Edition (Picador, 2015). Rachel Carson used the phrase “War against Nature” throughout her 1962 *SILENT SPRING*, Reprint Edition (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2022).

¹⁸ See Carolyn Merchant, *THE DEATH OF NATURE: WOMEN, ECOLOGY, AND THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION* (Harper & Row, 1980).

¹⁹ See the Indigenous teacher, Lyla June Johnson's 2024 pioneering Ph.D. dissertation, *ARCHITECTS OF ABUNDANCE: INDIGENOUS REGENERATIVE FOOD AND LAND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND THE EXCAVATION OF HIDDEN HISTORY*, available at <https://scholarworks.alaska.edu/handle/11122/13122>. See also the book by the visionary organic farmer from Southwest Virginia, Anthony Flaccavento, *BUILDING A HEALTHY ECONOMY FROM THE BOTTOM UP* (University Press of Kentucky, 2016).

- **Resist the New Right's Spiritual Disease of Religious Fascism** by drinking from authentic life-giving waters of spiritual wisdom traditions that defend life and promote courage and love. *(So far, secular attempts to stop the new Religious Fascism have failed. Perhaps eco-social spirituality can help stop it.)*
- **Seek spiritual wisdom from Indigenous Peoples' cosmologies**, which can be enhanced by newly emerging philosophical-scientific evolutionary cosmovisions, for example, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's "Personalizing Universe" and Thomas Berry's "Earth Spirituality."²⁰

(Indigenous cosmologies have always understood that we humans are an organic part of Nature, that we humans live in symbiotic communion with the rest of Nature, and that all of Nature is sacred. However, male elites in 'advanced' civilizations, first in classical form and later in modern form, have for millennia been waging war against Indigenous Peoples. These male elites have also tried to crush Indigenous Peoples' deep spiritual consciousness that Nature is sacred.²¹)

- **Seek eco-social spiritual guidance from praxis-oriented religious texts** like the Christian document LAUDATO SI': ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME, the Islamic document AL MIZAN: A COVENANT FOR THE EARTH, and other eco-spiritual documents found on the website of the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology.²²

(The Faith for Earth Coalition of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) has stated that "Spiritual values drive individual behaviors for more than 80 percent of people."²³ In 2020, UNEP, with the Parliament of the World's Religions, published an important book, FAITH FOR EARTH: A CALL FOR ACTION.²⁴ Commenting on the book,

²⁰ See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, THE HUMAN PHENOMENON, trans. Sarah Appleton-Weber (Sussex Academic Press, 2013) and Thomas Berry, THE DREAM OF THE EARTH (Sierra Club Books, 1998).

²¹ On the millennia-old war by Western elites against Indigenous Peoples, see the Native American legal scholar Robert A. Williams, Jr.'s powerful book, SAVAGE ANXIETIES: THE INVENTION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

²² See again https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html and <https://www.almizan.earth>. See the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology at <https://fore.yale.edu>.

²³ <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/faith-earth-initiative>

²⁴ <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/33991/FECA.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

UNEP stated that there are “more than one million houses of worship around the globe” and “this book provides a comprehensive overview of the faith traditions and scientific findings that underpin the understandings and reflections of world religions concerning environmental sustainability.”²⁵⁾

- *Finally, study and expose the deep philosophical and scientific root cause of this long, dark Winter’s night. That root cause has misguided the Modern World’s Industrial Civilization into its still-expanding “War against Nature,” which is now inflicting the “Sixth Great Extinction” of Earth Life and generating “The End of the Modern World.” I call that deep philosophical-scientific root cause the “MODERN WESTERN ATOMIST COSMOLOGY OF MECHANICAL MATERIALISM.”²⁶⁾*

- It is grounded philosophically in the nearly three-millennia-old Atomist Materialism taught by the anti-religious Greek philosopher Epicurus (341-270 BC).²⁷⁾
- During the 15th century, European Renaissance scholars retrieved Epicurus’s ancient teaching from the discovery of the long-lost Latin text, DE RERUM NATURA (On the Nature of Things), written by the classical Roman Epicurean poet-philosopher Lucretius (99-50 BC).²⁸⁾
- During the 17th century, European natural philosophers appropriated Epicurus’s atomistic-materialist teachings as the intellectual foundation for their atomizing and anti-ecological paradigm of Modern Techno-Science.²⁹⁾

Today, in Industrial Civilization’s capitalist and communist countries, so many modern university-educated elites, still follow – without realizing it – the anti-ecological,

²⁵⁾ See Note 22

²⁶⁾ See again Joe Holland, POSTMODERN ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY (Pacem in Terris Press, 2017), Chapters 3-5, which explain how the Modern Western Cosmology is rooted in the Atomist Philosophy of Mechanical Materialism taught by the classical Greek anti-religious philosopher Epicurus and how that Cosmology remains the dominant worldview of Western (largely male) elites.

²⁷⁾ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epicurus>

²⁸⁾ See the popularly oriented study defending Epicurean Atomist Materialism by the Harvard Shakespeare scholar Stephen Goldblatt, THE SWERVE: HOW THE WORLD BECAME MODERN (W. W. Norton, 2011).

²⁹⁾ On the influence of Epicureanism in early-modern philosophy and science, see the scholarly study by Catherine Wilson, EPICUREANISM AT THE ORIGINS OF MODERNITY (Oxford University Press, 2008).

**anti-social, and anti-spiritual worldview of the Modern Western Atomist Cosmology
of Mechanical Materialism.³⁰**



³⁰ Epicureanism is at the philosophical foundations of both Liberalism and Marxism. Karl Marx wrote his doctoral dissertation at the University of Berlin on Epicurus (and on Epicurus' predecessor, Democritus).