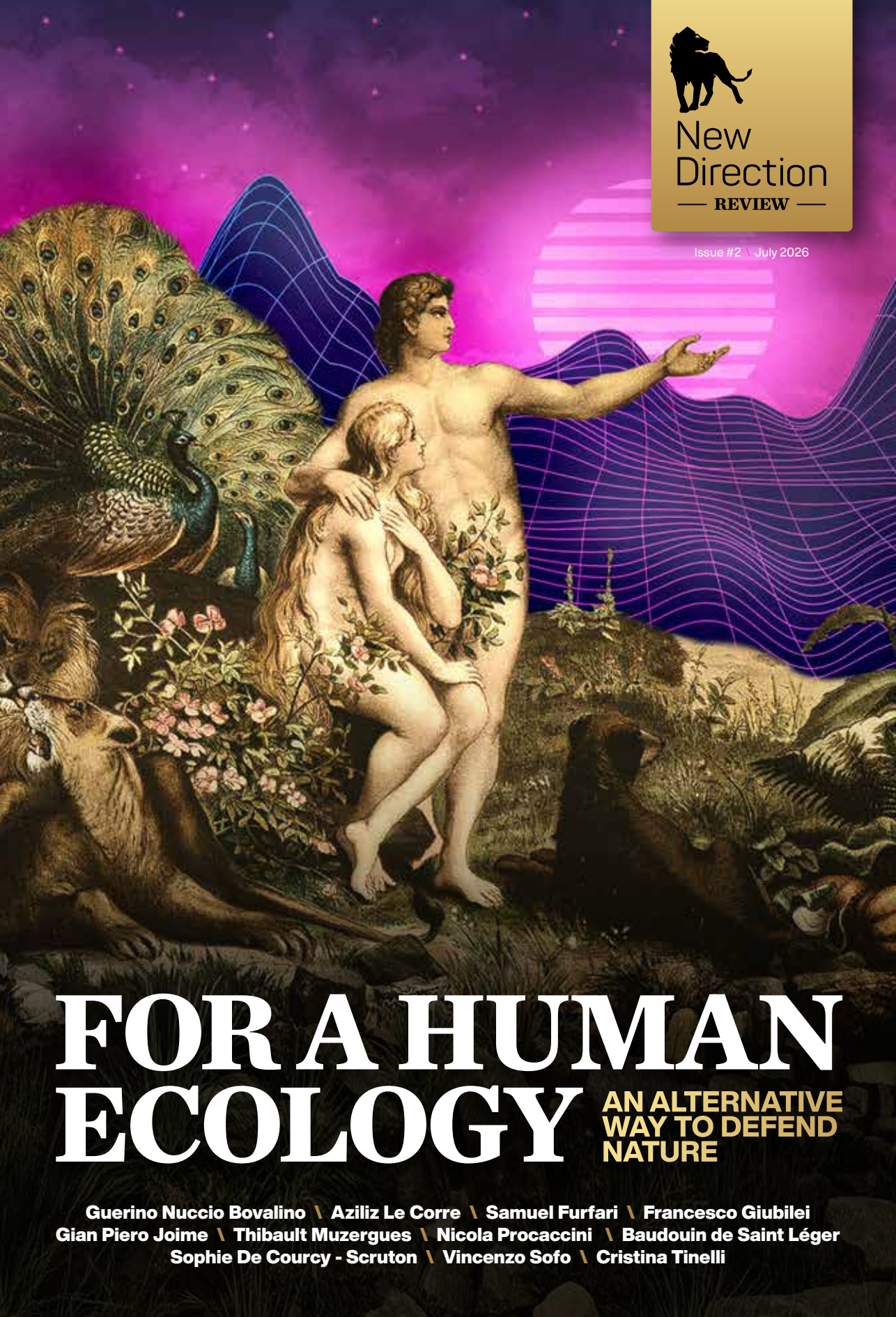




New
Direction

— REVIEW —

Issue #2 July 2026



FOR A HUMAN ECOLOGY

AN ALTERNATIVE
WAY TO DEFEND
NATURE

Guerino Nuccio Bovalino \ Aziliz Le Corre \ Samuel Furfari \ Francesco Giubilei
Gian Piero Joime \ Thibault Muzergues \ Nicola Procaccini \ Baudouin de Saint Léger
Sophie De Courcy - Scruton \ Vincenzo Sofo \ Cristina Tinelli



New
Direction

the Foundation for European Conservatism



New Direction – Foundation for European Conservatism, was founded in 2009 as the official foundation of the European Conservatives and Reformists. Since then it has grown to become a leading voice for the European conservative movement – providing a platform for national foundations and civil society groups to be heard at the heart of European politics.

newdirection.online @ndconservatism

New Direction is registered in Belgium as a not-for-profit organisation and is partly funded by the European Parliament.
REGISTERED OFFICE: Rue du Trône, 4, 1000 Brussels, Belgium. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Witold de Chevilly.
The European Parliament and New Direction assume no responsibility for the opinions expressed in this publication. Sole liability rests with the author.



INTRODUCTION

CONSERVATIVE ECOLOGY

as the Protection of
Creation and Human Dignity

There is a deep-rooted connection between European civilisation and care for the environment, founded on the values of tradition, responsibility and continuity between generations. A bond now strengthened by the desire to reaffirm that the safeguarding of creation does not belong to any particular political ideology but constitutes a moral and civic duty rooted in the conservative and liberal traditions.

One of the key figures behind this vision is the British philosopher Roger Scruton, who saw the defence of our homeland, our community and our identity as the foundation of genuine environmentalism. Care for the environment stems, in fact, from a sense of belonging to a place and from the responsibility to pass it on intact to future generations.



Nicola Procaccini MEP
President of New Direction,
co-chair of the ECR Group

As Scruton argues in *A Political Philosophy: Arguments for Conservatism*, both conservatism and environmentalism ultimately aspire to protect our common home: the place where we are, the

place that defines us, which we hold in trust for our descendants and which we do not wish to damage. In short, the protection of our identity and our very future also depends on the defence of our territory, our nation and nature.

Conservative ecology thus presents itself as an ecology of moderation, proximity and rootedness. It values the tangible reality of territories, communities and landscapes, opposing abstract and centralised visions. Nature is not regarded as a theoretical concept, but as a living reality with which people have, over the centuries, built a daily relationship based on respect and stewardship.

This approach, which I have sought to explore in my recent book *The Ecology of Conservatives: Rediscovering the Sacred in Nature* (Giubilei Regnani, 2026, with a foreword by Giorgia Meloni)



EDITOR
Vincenzo Sofo

AUTHORS
Samuel Furfari
Francesco Giubilei
Thibault Muzergues
Gian Piero Joime
Sophie De Courcy - Scruton
Baudouin de Saint Léger
Aziliz Le Corre
Cristina Tinelli
Guerino Nuccio Bovalino

ART DIRECTION
Davor Vidović

CONTACT
New Direction
Rue du Trone 4
Brussels 1000, Belgium
contact@newdirection.online
newdirection.online

July 2026
© 2026 New Direction

New Direction is registered
in Belgium as a not-for-
profit organisation and
is partly funded by the
European Parliament.

The European Parliament
and New Direction assume no
responsibility for the opinions
expressed in this publication.

Sole liability rests
with the author.



has its roots in both European cultural tradition and Christian social thought. From the thought of Leo XIII through to John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Pope Francis and Leo XIV, a concept of “human ecology” emerges that links the protection of the environment to the defence of human dignity, the family and communities.

Nature and humankind are not opposing forces: humankind is called upon to steward creation responsibly, without exploiting or arbitrarily manipulating it.

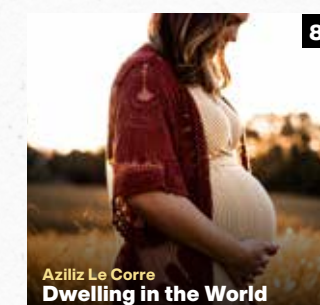
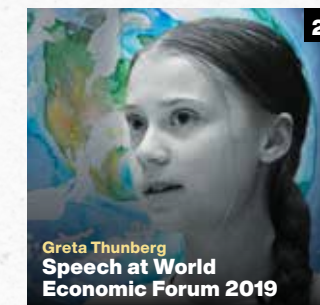
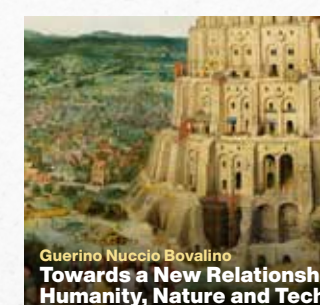
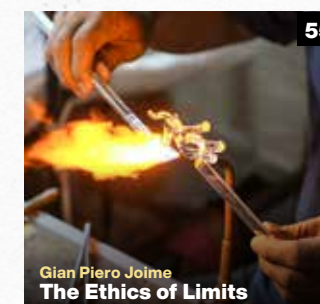
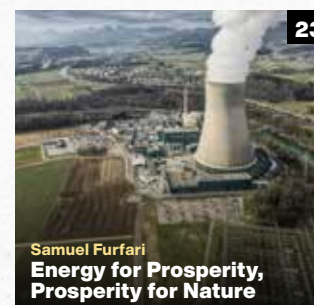
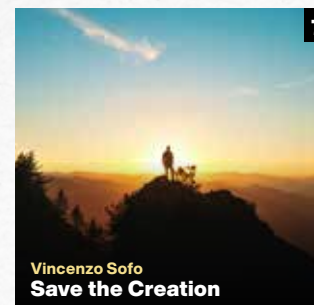
From this perspective, green conservatism is not a compromise or a contradiction, but the revival of a tradition that regards human beings as stewards of the world. Freedom finds its balance in the recognition of limits, whilst progress must develop in harmony with the preservation of what is of value.

However, the evolution of a strand of contemporary environmentalism has led to clear distortions, to the point where it has gradually become an ideological and political tool. Certain European policies, such as the Green Deal, are a clear example of this; whilst pursuing laudable environmental objectives, they have adopted an approach that is too rigid and pays insufficient attention to the economic, productive and social consequences. Conservative ecology, on the other hand, takes the form of a gradual, pragmatic ecological transition that is compatible with the needs of businesses, and the labour market, while respecting national sovereignty. In this vision, environmental protection cannot be separated from the defence of communities, identities and real economies. There is no sustainability without local roots, nor an ecological future without social responsibility. This is why conservatism proposes a form of modernity capable of combining innovation and continuity, economic development and environmental protection, individual freedom and collective responsibility.

As you will read in this second edition of our magazine, conservative ecology presents itself as a vision for the future, not as a longing for the past. At its heart lies the idea that the environmental issue is first and foremost a matter of civilisation: it concerns the way in which a society preserves its roots, protects its natural and cultural heritage, and prepares the world it will leave to future generations. Defending the environment therefore means defending civilisation itself, handing down to our children a home that is still habitable, recognisable and worthy of love. ▀

“Defending
the environment
therefore means
defending
civilisation itself.”

CONTENTS



107



Photo by Julentto Photography on Unsplash



EDITORIAL

Save the CREATION

NOT FUELING THE CONFLICT BETWEEN HUMAN AND NATURE BUT RESTORING THEIR HARMONY

Vincenzo Sofo

Once upon a time, there were social rights, the beating heart of the revolutionary march of the Western left, based on the familiar framework of the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, workers and employers. They were the soul of a red flag which, however, over time, has had to turn increasingly fuchsia as the Western left has become the very armed wing of the capitalism they claimed to want to fight. How, then, could they justify this change of allegiance to their electorate and the public? How could they revive the mobilising framework of class struggle if the defence of social rights was no longer the priority and the 'boss' was the new friend? By replacing the category of rights to fight for, eliminating the 'social' ones and substituting them with 'civil' rights.

This is the genesis of the transformation of the 'socialist' left into the 'progressive' left, founded on two pillars: the battle for vocal minority rights, transposing (and distorting) the concept of class struggle into the hierarchy of grievances between increasingly

subdivided groups, and the battle for the environment, creating a class struggle between defenders of nature and polluters. The latter is the most insidious because it manages to create a conflict in an area where there should be no reason for one to exist: for what person, indeed, would not fundamentally agree that we must preserve the place where we live as much as possible? What person would fundamentally be in favour of poisoning the water they drink or the food they eat?

The human being is a disruptive element within the Earth's ecosystem, an excessive presence to be contained, limited or corrected, if not eliminated altogether.

And yet, perhaps to ensure that this realisation would lead to a consensus of intent, progressive pseudo-environmentalism has managed to create a further conflict within its own irreconcilable narrative: that between Man and Nature, the former being the latter's

principal enemy. Thus, every problem now seems to lead to the same conclusion: the human being is a disruptive element within the Earth's ecosystem, an excessive presence to be contained, limited or corrected, if not eliminated altogether. An environmentalism whose aim is to blame humanity rather than understand its role in the world and preserve the harmony of the whole.

“Conservative ecological thinking must therefore be a holistic approach, aimed at reshaping the future to make it a place where Man and Nature once again form a Harmony.”

The reaction from the right, in opposition to this, has in some cases resulted in an equally risky approach: that of regarding Man as the owner of Nature, and Nature as a tool for Man's work. Or in closing our eyes and

denying that the socio-economic model in which we live is having effects on our ecosystem that we must take into account and which may backfire, but also that Nature has its own life cycles and evolutions that transcend us and which we can only manipulate to a limited extent, having – whether we like it or not – to largely endure them. The debate surrounding global warming is emblematic: between those who say it is man's fault and those who say it does not exist, it is as if no hypothesis can be considered that does not include the idea that there might be something with its own dynamics independent of man, which man cannot control and in the face of which man is a passive subject whose only room for manoeuvre is to adapt.



Vincenzo Sofo
Editor-in-chief of "New Direction Review"

Yet, between the anti-human and the ultra-human perspectives, there is a third that does nothing more than return to the fundamentals of our civilisation. Viewing Nature as Creation and Man as the central element of this creation, entrusted with understanding, protecting and passing it on to future generations. This is why he should not be blamed but empowered, not marginalised but placed back at the centre. Human ecology.

This perspective allows us to reconcile economic and social growth with environmental protection, overcoming the dichotomy between progress and conservation. But above all, it shields us from one of modernity's most profound excesses: the transhumanist conception of humanity. For if the human being is regarded as a problem, it becomes natural to imagine that they must be corrected, modified. Not only in their habits and customs, but also in their biological, natural constraints. And it is here that the philosophical short-circuit of progressive ecology becomes apparent, whereby the 'biological' applies to the courgette but not to man.

Conceiving a new ecosophy that views man and nature as one, however, means—even within the conservative world—rewinding the thread of social and economic evolution that has brought us to today's world, in order to re-examine certain trajectories and attempt to devise alternative models and paths. Consider, for example, the technological race for progress in the field of artificial intelligence, a tool so powerful yet so monstrously energy-intensive that it risks causing a genuine environmental sustainability problem in the years to come, even greater than that caused by the environmental impact of the ongoing energy transition. Just as it is evident that environmental sustainability stands in stark contrast to the model of global society and economy so ardently desired by progressives.

Reflections on a return to the local inevitably lead to reflections on a return to the small:

For decades we have imagined the future as a process of concentration: the larger the cities, the larger the infrastructure, the larger the markets. Economic gigantism has shaped urban gigantism.

to local communities, to close-knit relationships, and to small-scale ownership. *The oikophilia* theorised by Roger Scruton – love for one's home – is possible only through the development of a sense of belonging which, in turn, requires a community small enough to be touched and experienced, and thus to create an almost visceral bond essential for motivating the individual to care for a particular place. This forces us to question the sustainability of a model of territorial development based on demographic, economic and social concentration in a few large metropolitan cities where

nature vanishes, overwhelmed by skylines of glass, metal and concrete. For decades we have imagined the future as a process of concentration: the larger the cities, the larger the infrastructure, the larger the markets. Economic gigantism has shaped urban gigantism. Except that today we realise that the consequence of this model is

traffic, smog, noise pollution, land consumption, but also anonymity and social fragmentation.

Does technology not offer us the opportunity to implement a strategy of de-metropolisation? This does not mean abandoning cities, but rather rebalancing the relationship between metropolises, medium-sized towns, small towns and rural areas. It means bringing people, services, jobs and innovation back to smaller, more liveable communities. It means shortening supply chains, promoting locally sourced produce, boosting local economies and restoring the central role of intermediary bodies that link the individual to the state, for it is above all within families, associations, neighbourhoods, small local businesses and villages that a culture of responsibility is built. Because only those who belong to a place can truly care for it.

Conservative ecological thinking must therefore be a holistic approach, aimed at reshaping the future to make it a place where Man and Nature once again form a Harmony. Where Man is no longer the predator, nor the outcast: but the steward of Creation. ▀



A Brief History of CONSERVATIVE ECOLOGICAL THOUGHT

Francesco Giubilei

There are two major stereotypes surrounding the world of the right, as widespread in mainstream debate as they are false, concerning culture and the environment. The cliché is that conservatives do not care about either culture or the environment, but nothing could be further from the truth. Just as there is an important right-wing cultural tradition, there is also a tradition of green conservatism, although, to be fair, rather than talking about the environment we should use the term ecology.

For this reason, outlining the principles of green conservatism is a priority as well as defining the characteristics of an identity-based ecologism.

In the United States and Great Britain, *green conservatism* is in the limelight and it is no coincidence that the journal of the «Intercollegiate Studies Institute» (a conservative think tank chaired by Johnny Burtka) has published an article by Kai Weiss and Christopher Barnard entitled *The Return to Green Conservatism*.

One of the first American presidents to commit himself to the issue of the environment was Republican Teddy Roosevelt, who called the wonders of nature “the most glorious heritage” and, even the

English-speaking conservative cultural world, has long been concerned with ecology and nature. In addition to Roger Scruton and his concept of *oikophilia*, other authors such as Richard Weaver have spoken out in favor of a green conservatism: “Man has a duty of veneration towards nature” because it is “the inheritance of a creator”. The link with God also emerges from the words of the poet T.S. Eliot who emphasizes the connection between environment and religion for which “a wrong attitude towards nature also implies a wrong attitude towards God”. On the other hand, there is a biblical foundation for the preservation of nature as early as *Genesis*, in which it emerges that men have dominion over all creatures and therefore are also responsible for the care of the world and, if this does not happen, God’s wrath would be unleashed.

The turmoil in the United States and Great Britain is not only cultural but also political, with organizations such as the American Conservation Coalition and the British Conservation Alliance involving thousands of young people and promoting an alternative form of environmentalism to that of the left, drawing on the legacy of Scruton and Russell Kirk.

There are two major stereotypes surrounding the world of the right, as widespread in mainstream debate as they are false, concerning culture and the environment.

Great Britain has an important cultural tradition dedicated to *conservative environmentalism*, as «The Critic» magazine recalls in an article in which it addresses the Conservative Party, “once a party of the countryside that should return to being so because it could also bring votes”. To do this, it is necessary to start from the rediscovery of the cultural heritage of the two main English writers of the twentieth century: Tolkien and Lewis.

Among the English-language authors most attentive to the theme of nature is also Wendell Berry: “the agrarian writer who preserves and prays”. Author of dozens of books, Berry is a real “writer-farmer”, he lives with his wife in Kentucky where he cultivates a plot of land referring to the teaching of the Gospel. In his writings emerges “The relationship with the land, with local traditions, the simplicity of ancient customs and a sharp criticism of technological society and the unbridled market”.

As Nicola Procaccini recounts in his book *L'ecologia dei conservatori. Il ritorno al sacro della natura*, one of the pillars of conservative ecologism is the theme of identity and tradition understood as the protection of food, of local customs. Another central aspect of the right-wing view of ecology is the need to reconcile environmental protection with economic growth. To make this happen, a gradual energy transition must be facilitated in order to avoid significant job losses. “Gradualness” is one of the watchwords for the conservative approach to environmental issues.

The centrality assumed by the environment in the economic, social and media agenda in recent years imposes a political recipe to decline ecological projects and initiatives not only from a cultural but also from a political point of view, in fact it is necessary to prevent the left from taking possession of a topic that should be close to the heart of all citizens, transcending any mere ideal question.

This issue cannot be given away to those who seek to pursue a globalist approach (of which Greta Thunberg is the emblem), while overlooking local customs and traditions, as Roger Scruton argued, believing that the protection of nature comes from the local dimension even before the global one.

Then there is a political reason: young people (mostly post-ideological) have a strong sensitivity to environmental issues and, neglecting to develop policies in this area, would mean that the conservative world risks failing to attract the support of new generations.

But the real reason why the environmental battle cannot be given to the left is cultural:

environmentalism belongs to the history of the Italian and European right, starting from movements such as the Wandervogel to Sermons, from Jünger to conservative thought, it is enough to draw on our tradition to build a greener future.

Paraphrasing Greta Thunberg – emblem of everything that is not an identity ecologism – “we need to act quickly”, not because our planet is burning (the catastrophic narrative is another aspect to be overcome), but because the progressive world is hegemonically taking possession of the environmental issue. It's time for green conservatism before it's too late.

A few years ago, the magazine «The American Conservative» dedicated an entire issue to the environmental questions viewed from a conservative perspective entitled *An Ecology that Conserves*. In the article *Look Back For The Future Of Conservative Environmentalism*, Micah Meadowcroft attempts to outline the “long history of right-wing environmentalism”. The text opens with a reference to Theodore Roosevelt and his relationship with nature, as recounted in the book *Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* by Edmund Morris. Wilderness represented a place of escape throughout Roosevelt's life where he could really be himself and regain vital energy. Roosevelt firmly believed in the “frontier thesis” as both a living space and a place where animals can roam freely. Meadowcroft denounces how, even in the United States, conservatives have politically abandoned environmental issues to the left “and it is a shame,” he adds, “because we will have to protect human health and the environment.” To take the dangers of pollution seriously, “we don't need the abstract apocalypticism of the green movement.”

An alternative conservative perspective is therefore needed, drawing inspiration from the thought of Roosevelt and his “Boone and Crockett Club” which inspired the creation of national parks. In an ecological vision in which everything is connected, the human being is not only a preserver of the space in which he lives but “an integral pivotal point around which the natural world revolves”. Meadowcroft focuses on the shift from the centrality of conservation and ecology to a form of environmentalism that predicts human extinction or future catastrophe if the problem of pollution is not solved.

Since the post-war period and with the massive spread of industrialization, the dangers of unregulated production from an environmental point of view have become evident and political measures must be taken.

Thus, in 1969, Republican Richard Nixon approved the National Environmental Policy Act with the aim

“Environmentalism belongs to the history of the Italian and European right.”

of “declaring a national policy that will encourage productive and pleasant harmony between man and his environment”.

On April 22 of the following year, the first Earth Day was celebrated marking the beginning of what would become the Environmental Protection Agency. Among the first problems addressed is the issue of pollution and waste: “Efforts against pollution fall into two categories: not producing new garbage and improving disposal, bearing in mind a sort of minimum accepted amount of dirt.” It is in this period that the awareness of coordinated public action develops, as everything is related when it comes to the environment. A systemic approach is therefore needed to address the dangers to the environment as a whole. This introduces the concept of “environmental ethics”, i.e. the need for each person to measure the impact of their actions on the environment around us. Micah Meadowcroft's article concludes with a cautionary tale: conservative environmental policy should return to conservation and take ecological regionalism seriously. “Our job is to make sure that every American, no matter where they live or what their income is, has a clean space in which to develop, to grow into their best selves. The task is not to pile up new rules upon rules, to tell people how to conform to national standards, but rather to help them conform appropriately to their region.”

Thus emerges an environmentalism rooted in small communities and local realities which, when translated into the European context, acquires even greater centrality, given that environmentalism in Europe has taken on a supranational perspective through the policies of the European Union.

As Kai Weiss and Christopher Barnard write in *The Return to “Green” Conservatism* published in the journal of the «Intercollegiate Studies Institute», “while trying to protect our planet has become a problem defined by the left and often ignored by the right, embracing environmentalism would actually be the continuation of a powerful conservative legacy.” As already mentioned, in the United States one of the first presidents to commit to environmental protection was Republican Teddy Roosevelt and the conservative intellectual world has also dealt carefully with environmental issues.

Regarding the need to preserve the natural heritage, Roosevelt states: “we have fallen heirs to the most glorious heritage people ever received, and each one must do his part if we wish to show that the nation is worthy of its good fortune”.

Although the National Park Service was born seven years after the end of Roosevelt's presidency, many of the initiatives of the National Park System are linked to him thanks to his Antiquities Act of 1906, with which he identified twenty-three sites that will become part of the National Park Service.

An article entitled *Socialism Is Bad for the Environment* was published in the journal «National Review» in which Shawn Regan, Vice-president of research at the Property and Environment Research Center, carrying out a historical analysis, explains why socialism (and communism) are harmful to the environment starting from the experience of the Soviet Union.

With the end of the USSR, the failure of centralized economic planning took place, but after a short time, it became clear that “the socialist economies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union were not just economic failures; they were also environmental catastrophes” as witnessed by the economist Jeffrey Sachs. In the USSR there was abundant water and air pollution, as well as gaseous pollution with serious consequences on people's health: respiratory diseases were rampant. In East Germany, 60% of the population suffered from respiratory disorders. In Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), nearly half of children population had intestinal disorders caused by contaminated water. It was found that children in Poland had five times more lead in their blood than children in Western Europe.

The fall of the Iron Curtain brought to light all the critical issues and environmental disasters that occurred within the USSR and, if the case of Chernobyl is the most striking, other very serious episodes took place such as the destruction of the Aral Sea between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, “one of the worst environmental disasters on the planet” caused by the Soviet government's choice in the sixties to increase the production of rice and cotton in the area, causing the drying up of the basin. This was not only an environmental problem but also a public health issue, since, when the waters of the lake receded, pesticides accumulated through agricultural activity emerged from the seabed and were carried by the wind across

the neighboring territories. The consequences are still felt today, with infant mortality rates in the Aral Sea region remaining far higher than the national average in Uzbekistan.

Yet, as Cuban-American researchers Sergio-Díaz Briquets and Jorge Pérez-López wrote, “according to conventional Marxist-Leninist dogma, environmental deterioration has been accelerated by the logic of capitalism and its relentless pursuit of profit,” and the goal of socialism was precisely to foster a classless society with men in harmony with each other and the environment. This did not happen in the USSR where utopia gave way to a very different reality. Socialist planning on heavy industry has generated consequences for the environment with massive industrial pollution in factories in Eastern Europe, and the lack of efficiency of central planning has led to an overuse of natural resources. To these problems must be added the issue of “property rights”: “in a socialist society without property rights it is impossible to hold individuals or governments responsible for environmental damage: planners can increase industrial production without compensating those who bear the costs in the form of pollution”. Shawn Regan concludes his article by stating: As socialist ideas capture the American imagination – and are often portrayed, as with the Green New Deal, as necessary to avoid environmental catastrophe – it's important to remember socialism's dismal environmental legacy. Capitalism may be a dirty word these days, but when it comes to producing the prosperity and creativity necessary to sustain a clean environment, it's still the best system we've got.

When politics deals with the environment, interests and pressures come into play, the consequences of which emerge in the writing of laws. Many environmental problems can be solved “by giving power back to communities and individuals, recognizing their sovereignty rather than stifling it through centralized, top-down decision-making,” so “conservative principles are the basis of the best solutions to protect the planet.” We need to focus on local and decentralized forces. The Swiss villages that manage their shared pastures are an example of how the best tool for protecting nature is based “on mutual trust, local knowledge and community traditions, none of which can be provided by a central government”.

The survey of young members of the American Conservation Coalition is interesting: “77% consider climate change a top priority, while 76% want greater conservative leadership on environmental issues”. The strength of realities such as the ACC is the connection with the political world; in the United States, the Republican Party has introduced environmental laws such as the American Energy Innovation Act and the Great American Outdoors Act in various states. Weiss and Barnard conclude their article by stating

that: making the world a greener place should be a thought rooted in the psyche of conservatives. Doing so starting from the local and through personal, entrepreneurial and voluntary responsibility through the market economy is not only the best way to achieve this goal but is also the most conservative.

The existence of a particular concern within the conservative world for the theme of nature is also reflected in the history of English literature, as emerges from Ferdie Rous' article *The writings of Lewis and Tolkien embody conservative environmentalism*, in explores the issue through the works of Lewis and Tolkien. Rous, referring to an Extinction Rebellion demonstration, emphasizes their political character and the feeling that “the climate is just another vehicle with which to fight the system.” As Roger Scruton writes in his book *Confession of a Heretic*, true environmentalism is about “the preservation of resources... conservation and balance”. In addition to the contribution of their books to the history of world literature, Tolkien and Lewis have dedicated important pages to recounting “the dangers of industry and the death of greenery and the earth”.

On the one hand, C.S. Lewis's descriptions of “the animals, trees and fruits of Narnia that focus on the individuality of nature”, talking animals that represent “the constant dialogue in nature, the push and pull that maintains a balance and the uniqueness of any ecosystem”. Thus, characters such as Uncle Andrew, the magician who “wants to monetize nature by bending it to his will at the expense of balance” are represented as enemies of Narnia.

Tolkien, on the other hand, personifies “nature in time and terrain”. The figure of Saruman burning wood to fuel the fires of the Isengard furnaces is the emblem of evil, an ante litteram denunciation of the scourge of deforestation: “The different approaches of Lewis and Tolkien demonstrate the weakness of nature, the ease with which it can be destroyed or exploited and the impossibility of replacing it”.

Both are witnesses of the First World War, the construction of the trenches along the Somme and the devastation that the conflict inflicted upon the land. As a result, “their writings speak of the need to defend nature from the industrial drive that made war possible”.

The Lord of the Rings and *The Chronicles of Narnia* do not have a happy ending, “the innocence of the pre-industrial Shire and Narnia are lost and the latter is abandoned”, today we live in a historical moment characterized by increasing urbanization and “an

inability to understand nature, often on the part of those who claim to protect it”.

In France, too, the need for conservative environmentalism emerges. Pierre Caye Dürer, for example, questions the need to transform the production system; ecology has been on the public policy agenda for 50 years and both the right and the left aspire to “change the current model”.

According to Caye, “the entire production system must be transformed and capital should no longer have only the sole concern of profitability but also of preserving our heritage”.

Thus emerges the relationship between ecology and the “ancient virtues swept away by the design of the bourgeois Civil Code”, ecology is in fact “transmission and conservation” and requires a “policy of heritage”, this does not mean being against property but underlining the contradictions of modern capitalism that flows faster and faster and in constant search of greater profitability. As Caye writes in his book, “globalization is the generalized transformation of closures. Its opposite is the return to heritage as a protected resource.” A capitalism that no longer

knows borders and even goes beyond property, governments have renounced their sovereignty to chase modern “governance” which has as its “sole mission to integrate populations into the globalized system”.

Also in France, the newspaper “Le Figaro” published an interview with

Caspar van den Berg, professor at the University of Groningen, entitled *Le rêve écologique des urbains ne doit pas briser le monde rural*. The professor points out that a socio-economic and socio-cultural conflict is underway that leads the working classes to vote no longer for the left but for right-wing parties. In this sense, he takes up the city-suburban dichotomy of Christophe Guilluy, which is grafted onto the debate on the theme of the environment and the future of agriculture. Caspar van den Berg poses a very important question related to alternative energy sources: “Rural people fear that solar panels and wind turbines will be imposed on them and that the landscapes and identity of their world will be ruined. The energy transition will take place in rural areas but with the aim of serving mainly urban areas.”

Yet the voice of rural areas does not reach the places of power and so, the vote of these areas is oriented either towards populist movements or towards right-wing parties, also due to the rejection of multiculturalism and immigration for which people no longer recognize their old neighborhoods.

“It's time for green conservatism before it's too late.”

The socialist economies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union were not just economic failures; they were also environmental catastrophes

However, reducing this vote to the issue of immigration alone would be wrong, since it is also a choice against the city elites and their hegemony in decision-making processes. The point raised by Caspar van den Berg is that the “urban dream” cannot be pursued at the expense of rural areas and that the real challenge for the future “will be to understand whether we are able to implement a just transition for all and whose side effect is not to break the fibers of our society”.

Also “Le Figaro” published an article entitled *À la recherche d'un conservatisme vert qui réconcilierait villes et campagnes* by Laure Mandeville, in which she tries to define the line for a green conservatism capable of reconciling city and countryside. The ecological transition in Western countries risks generating a conflict between urban elites who dream of green cities and the countryside who are afraid to pay the social and cultural costs of transformation with the risk of creating a fracture between center and periphery.

Laure Mandeville refers to Caspar van den Berg's article by pointing out the growing divisions between large cities and suburbs and the risk of a major social fracture resulting from the ecological transition. On the one hand, there is the fear on the part of rural communities of seeing the landscapes and identity of their world ruined due to the ecological transition, on the other hand, the risk feared by the Californian urban planner Joël Kotkin, worried about the alliance between the world of Silicon Valley and the progressive green area, which does not take into account the difficulties of SMEs “to face the drastic ecological standards put in place in their state”. Thus there is a fracture between social classes determined by globalism and described by David Goodhart in his book *Les Deux Clans*, while “rural populations are afraid that we will impose solar panels and wind turbines without asking their opinion”.

The risk that the cost of the ecological transition will be passed on to the countryside is high, thus increasing the social gap.

“Appealing to the ‘conservatism of values’ and the defense of the natural environment, rejecting predatory liberalism no less than Marxist ‘Prometheism’ [...] it is at the same time revolutionary both in scope and in values. It is ultimately, by deliberately cutting bridges with the universe of mechanistic, analytical and reductionist thought that has accompanied the emergence of the modern individual, it recreates a relationship between man and the totality of the cosmos, which is perhaps nothing more than a way to protest against the ugliness of the world and to respond to the eternal enigma of beauty”.

The question of ecology cannot be reduced to perspectives concerning energy or technical questions alone...

Thus, a market-dominated society is contrasted with an identity-based vision grounded in localism. Among the cultural references of the new ecologism, we cannot fail to mention Christophe Guilluy, author of the essay *La France périphérique* in which he recounts the split of the country divided between metropolitan areas and provinces.

There is one theme that unites the conservatives' vision of ecology: the link with the sacred and with Christianity.

The Christian approach to nature emerges from the book by Riccardo Cascioli and Antonio Gaspari *The Lies of the Environmentalists. The false alarmism of the ecological movements* in which the activity of environmental organizations is analyzed and what does not add up from their management.

Msgr. Dominique Rey's text *Is it possible to be Catholic and environmentalist deserves special attention? Letter on ecology*, a true summa of Catholic ecologism as Samuel Gregg of the Acton Institute writes in the preface: the Catholic vision of the environment is in itself relatively easy to synthesize. Man is conceived as a being intrinsically superior to the natural world. He has been entrusted with dominion over nature so that he can use it to promote integral human development.

But man's domination is not absolute. We can't literally do what we want with animals and nature. Absolute dominion belongs to God alone.

Man is therefore subject to the divine moral law, as the

theologian Germain Grisez also affirms, and the objective of Monsignor Rey's text is “to show Catholics and other Christians a way of understanding the environment, so as to act correctly and consistently with the sacred scriptures, tradition and the Magisterium of the Church”.

The crisis of our conception of the environment arises from a deeper crisis of man, “when we lose the correct understanding of man's relationship with God and of how this relationship shapes man's understanding of himself, then it should not be surprising that our ability to conceive ecological issues coherently also begins to fail”.

It is no coincidence that Dominique Rey's text opens with the words of Pope Benedict xvi during the World Day of Peace in 2008.

According to the French Bishops' Conference, “the question of ecology cannot be reduced to perspectives concerning energy or technical questions alone”, and it is therefore necessary to rediscover the teaching of the Gospel.

Pope Benedict xvi maintains that “we must listen to the language of nature and respond to it coherently”, it is therefore necessary to establish an alliance

“Conservative principles are the basis of the best solutions to protect the planet.

between man and the earth as emerges from *Caritas in Veritate*, since “the earth, and all that it contains, reflects the beauty and glory of God. It is the wonderful work of the creator.”

Msgr. Rey's analysis of radical environmental movements that embrace so-called “deep ecology” and that “are clearly inspired by a pagan pantheism that leads to the deification of nature” is important. Thus we arrive at the conception of ecologism as a new religion: the contemporary ideology of ecologism

desired by God” and it is “impossible to conceive of a true ecology that is not one centered on man and not simply on the earth”.

A Christian vision of ecology must overcome the inhuman logic and “antispeciesism” theorized by Peter Singer, professor of bioethics at Princeton University. On the other hand, it is worth taking up the words of Joseph Ratzinger expressed in 1981 and collected in the text *‘In the Beginning...’: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, in which he stigma-



Photo by Justus Menke on Unsplash

transforms the nature of a cult: it is not a nature humanized by man, with his knowledge and his work, but an entity that exists before man and that can exist without him. The planet is seen as a divine spiritual being, the famous mother earth deity, Gaia, to whom we address through different channels, chthonic forces and life forces.

Monsignor Rey, analyzing the Earth Charter promulgated by UNESCO in 2000, argues for the risk that lies in deifying the earth and desecrating man. Thus a fundamental passage emerges in which he affirms that “the ecological crisis also derives from an anthropological crisis”, while the biblical point of view is anthropocentric since God created man in his own image and likeness. In this sense, if it is true that man can destroy nature, it is also true that he is the only creature capable of “giving it the meaning and value

tizes the attitude that “considers the human being as a disturber of peace, as the one who destroys everything, as the true parasite and disease of nature.”

Linked to this is the issue of overpopulation, which is considered one of the causes of the destruction of the environment with “a Malthusian-eugenic vision that in fact lacks an empirical scientific basis”.

A “human ecology” is necessary, as St. John Paul II affirmed already in the Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, combining respect for human life with respect for the environment: “it would be vain to insist on respect for the environment when the right to life is not respected,” a recurring theme in the magisterium of Benedict xvi because “an authentically Christian concept of ecology requires a defense of human life”: abortion, much more than deforestation or greenhouse gases, threatens man's harmony with the natural order! Therefore, the

ecological crisis is not disconnected from the demographic crisis of countries that today are currently experiencing population ageing and, in some cases, population decline.

The ecological crisis has a moral dimension and also stems from their idea that, in the contemporary era, human beings replace God and ultimately provoke a form of rebellion of nature. This arises from the application of scientific and technical progress with serious consequences on nature and, in particular, for human nature. Today “ecological problems are first and foremost ethical problems. We are facing a moral crisis, that is, a crisis of human choice and action. Therefore, the root of the problem lies in the human heart.” From a Catholic social perspective, environmental ecology is placed within the boundaries of human ecology, since “the ecological crisis was born in the human heart and is only the external extension of this internal tragedy”.

It is Benedict xvi himself who formulates an analogy between environmental ecology and spiritual ecology, there is not only air pollution that damages the environment but also pollution of the heart that is linked to spiritual life.

Among the main contradictions that animate environmental struggles, there is the fact that many people are concerned “more for the environment or for the natural habitat of the various animal species on the verge of extinction than for the well-being of man himself”.

We are experiencing the loss of the meaning of man’s history and his distancing from God which

“ Making the world a greener place should be a thought rooted in the psyche of conservatives.

leads to a suffering of nature “because man no longer lives in filial obedience to God, but as a rebel and ungrateful”, generating “catastrophic consequences for the environment due to the betrayal of the covenant with God”, therefore “animals and the natural world itself die because man distanced himself from God”.

Responsibility for the nature that surrounds us rests first and foremost with human beings. If a conversion in action is to take place, a prior conversion of hearts and minds is required. To do this, according to Monsignor Rey, it is necessary to rediscover the three fundamental means provided by the Church during Lent: prayer, fasting and charity (or prayer, penance, sharing).

The *Cantic of the Creatures* reveals God’s love and the need for a feeling of gratitude: it is necessary not only to respect but also to thank God for all that He has given us. The Benedictine tradition of *ora et labora* testifies to the care for the environment “where the Word of God is welcomed and meditated on, creation is saved rather than destroyed”.

Penance arises from the need to rethink our lifestyles to find a solution to the ecological problem by putting an end to a consumerism based on “excessive consumption, excessive use of means of transport, waste of all kinds” by learning the control and self-control of one’s instincts. What is needed is a return to the earth founded on love for it, as St. John Paul II said: “No one like those who cultivate the land can testify that if it is sterile, it does not bear fruit, while cared for with love it is a generous nourishment”.

It is no coincidence that in his Message for the World Day of Peace on January 1, 2010, Benedict xvi emphasizes how environmental issues have “a profound impact on the exercise of human rights, such as the right to life, food, health and development.”

In the conclusions of his text, Monsignor Rey affirms that an “ecological conversion” must begin with “a conversion of the heart with the aim of being able to trigger a conversion of morality and then of structures”. More than anything else, it is necessary to respect and preserve human ecology, Christians “can rebel against the exclusively materialistic vision of life, radical individualism and unbridled consumerism”. However, care must be taken because the search for harmony between man, God and the natural world “must keep away from neo-pagan pantheistic temptations that intend to show greater respect for nature and in doing so end up deifying it”, a vision that represents an antidote to radical individualism and collectivism.

In recent years, in conjunction with a growing attention to the environment, a marked sensitivity has emerged even among citizens of the problems

related to pollution, land consumption, uncontrolled overbuilding, undoubtedly positive news but in the meantime we have witnessed the attempt to impose ideas and values that have nothing to do with

the protection of the environment. Thus emerges a one-sided form of environmentalism that promotes a specific vision of the world and society, one that risks becoming unquestionable for fear of being labelled as opposed to environmental protection. In reality, an alternative perspective on environmentalism exists, but it is not only overlooked; in many cases, it is largely unknown. For this reason, it is necessary to give voice to “green conservatism”, and to a Christian, identity-based ecologism by overcoming the stereotype that the environment, as well as culture, cannot be a concern of the political right. Of course, center-right politics bears responsibility for not having paid the necessary attention in recent years to the environment, despite an important cultural tradition behind it, but something is changing and the interviews in the following pages are a testimony to this.

In reality, the protection of nature should not have a political color but should unite all citizens regardless of their ideas and the party they vote for. Therefore, the ideologization of environmentalism that has taken place in recent years risks being counterproductive by making us lose sight of the common goal in favor of the defense of the earth.

A different approach not only in terms of content (local before global, identity, protection of the weakest and the productive classes, man conceived as an ally and not as an enemy of nature) but also in the lexicon and terminology. The frequency with which the term environment (and environmentalism) is used and the scarcity of use of the word ecology (and ecologism) is striking. It is no coincidence that ecology refers to the science that studies the relationships between humans, plant and animal organisms and the environment in which they live. By referring only to the environment, the presence of man is erased and therefore an approach is concretized that tends to minimize (or even erase) the human presence. The opposite of the Christian approach and the concept of creation. But there is another word that has taken a back seat to the environment and it is “nature”. What we must keep at heart is first and foremost the nature that surrounds us, its rules, its times, respect what has been given to us and not pretend to be superior to it. In this sense, the opposite extreme occurs to those who deny the role of man represented by the triumph of materialism and rationalism. The watchwords must be respect, balance and harmo-

ny. Respect for everything that surrounds us, for the nature that has been given to us and that we have a duty to preserve. Balance because man and nature must create a balance based on harmony, from the way of living to that

The ecological crisis was born in the human heart and is only the external extension of this internal tragedy.

of building, without ever forgetting the preservation of what the ancient Romans called *genius loci*, the spirit of man, his soul, identity, sacredness without which there can be no true love for the earth and nature. A sacredness that unites nature and literature united by the sense of beauty, which is why we have decided to publish Pier Paolo Pasolini’s verses dedicated to the divine right “defend, preserve, pray”, the pages of Gabriele D’Annunzio with his descriptions of nature, the unpublished memories in Italy of the leading European philosopher Roger Scruton, as well as Thoreau. Separating nature from the concept of beauty means not being able to understand its profound meaning that only by living in close contact with it and letting ourselves be carried away by the words of the great writers, we can truly appreciate. ▀



Francesco Giubilei
Scientific Director of
“Fondazione Alleanza Nazionale”



GRETA THUNBERG

Speech at World Economic Forum

Davos, 25th January 2019

Our house is on fire. I am here to say, our house is on fire. According to the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), we are less than 12 years away from not being able to undo our mistakes. In that time, unprecedented changes in all aspects of society need to have taken place, including a reduction of our CO₂ emissions by at least 50%. And please note that those numbers do not include the aspect of equity, which is absolutely necessary to make the Paris agreement work on a global scale. Nor does it include tipping points or feedback loops like the extremely powerful methane gas released from the thawing Arctic permafrost. At places like Davos, people like to tell success stories. But their financial success has come with an unthinkable price tag. And on climate change, we have to acknowledge we have failed. All political movements

in their present form have done so, and the media has failed to create broad public awareness. But Homo sapiens have not yet failed. Yes, we are failing, but there is still time to turn everything around. We can still fix this. We still have everything in our own hands. But unless we recognise the overall failures of our current systems, we most probably don't stand a chance.

Now is not the time for speaking politely... Now is the time to speak clearly.

We are facing a disaster of unspoken sufferings for enormous amounts of people. And now is not the time for speaking politely or focusing on what we can or cannot say. Now is the time to speak clearly. Solving the climate crisis is the greatest and most complex challenge that Homo sapiens have ever faced. The main solution, however, is so simple that even a small child

can understand it. We have to stop our emissions of greenhouse gases. Either we do that or we don't.

Either we choose to go on as a civilisation or we don't. That is as black or white as it gets. There are no grey areas when it comes to survival. We all have a choice. We can create transformational action that will safeguard the living conditions for future generations. Or we can continue with our business as usual and fail. That is up to you and me. Some say we should not engage in activism. Instead we

should leave everything to our politicians and just vote for a change instead. But what do we do when there is no political will? What do we do when the politics needed are nowhere in sight? Here in Davos – just like everywhere else – everyone is talking about money. It seems money and growth are our only main concerns. And since the climate crisis has never once

“Homo sapiens have not yet failed.”

been treated as a crisis, people are simply not aware of the full consequences on our everyday life. People are not aware that there is such a thing as a carbon budget, and just how incredibly small that remaining carbon budget is. That needs to change today. No other current challenge can match the importance of establishing a wide, public awareness and understanding of our rapidly disappearing carbon budget, that should and must become our new global currency and the very heart of our future and present economics.

We are at a time in history where everyone with any insight of the climate crisis that threatens our civilisation – and the entire biosphere – must speak out in clear language, no matter how uncomfortable and unprofitable that may be. We must change almost everything in our current societies. The bigger your carbon footprint, the bigger your moral duty. The bigger your platform, the bigger your responsibility. Adults keep saying: “We owe it to the young people to give them hope.” But I don't want your hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if our house is on fire. Because it is. ▀





Photo by Patrick Federi on Unsplash



ENERGY FOR PROSPERITY FOR NATURE

Samuel Furfari

T rue environmentalism is not the enemy of humanity, but its servant—and prosperity is its first instrument. Wherever men are poor, nature is plundered: forests are cut for firewood, rivers are fouled, soils are exhausted, animals are hunted to the limit of survival. Wherever men are prosperous, nature is cultivated, restored, and admired. And prosperity itself has a single material foundation: the massive, reliable, affordable use of energy. No civilisation has ever grown rich in scarcity; none ever will. The Green Deal and progressive environmentalism have inverted this elementary truth, sacrificing European union prosperity on the altar of ideology by attacking the very thing that produces it—energy in abundance. It is time to reclaim a human ecology—one that places the dignity, creativity, and flourishing of man at the centre, and that recognises a simple historical fact: prosperous men protect nature; impoverished men consume it. Abundant energy, technological progress, and pragmatic stewardship are not threats to the environment—they are the conditions of its preservation.

Preamble A POLLUTION FIGHTER SPEAKS

I write these lines not as a theorist, but as a practitioner—a scientist, an officer of an international administration and also a university professor who has spent several decades at the core of EU energy policy, addressing tangible forms of pollution rather than abstract or hypothetical threats. My career at the Directorate General for Energy of the European Commission was shaped by the major environmental challenges of the late twentieth century.

In parallel, I contributed to the decentralisation of energy policy towards local authorities and to the early structuring of climate governance prior to COP1. My professional engagement also encompassed the promotion of energy efficiency, energy conservation, and the development of renewable energy sources. I regard this body of work as a significant and tangible contribution to environmental protection, and as representative of what may be considered the authentic legacy of European environmentalism.

**Wherever men are poor,
nature is plundered...
Wherever men are
prosperous, nature is
cultivated, restored,
and admired.**

“Man is not the problem; man is the solution.”

Let us be clear: the environmental achievements of the 1970s through the 2000s were not the product of ideological crusades. They were the result of pragmatic and technology-driven policies. We measured our success in the declining concentrations of SO₂, NO_x, and lead in the air our children breathe; in the recovery of forests and lakes once devastated by acid rain; in the transformation of rivers from industrial sewers to living ecosystems. We did not need to demonise energy, nor did we need to sacrifice prosperity on the altar of abstract virtues. What conservatives understood then, and what progressive ecologism has since forgotten, is that the prosperity which paid for these clean-ups was not the enemy of environmental progress—it was its precondition.

Today, however, a new orthodoxy reigns in Brussels-Strasbourg and across the capitals of Member States. The Green Deal, presented as the apotheosis of ecological responsibility, is in fact a political instrument responding to ideological imperatives. It is constructed according to an obstructive and repressive approach to human activity.

I reject this inversion. Man is not the problem; man is the solution. The central thesis of this essay is simple: protecting nature requires protecting humanity, and the first tool for that is abundant energy—not degrowth, not restriction, not the cult of CO₂ to use the words of Marco Rubio in the Munich Conference. It is time for conservatives to stop capitulating to green ideology out of fear of being blamed. We must reverse the narrative. We must reclaim the tradition of human ecology—a tradition that recognises man’s superiority to nature, not as a license for exploitation, but as a duty of stewardship and creativity.

The Philosophical Foundations WHAT IS HUMAN ECOLOGY?

What, then, is human ecology? It is not a slogan, but a coherent philosophical and theological alternative to the progressive environmentalism that has captured our institutions.

The Judaeo-Christian tradition that creates Europe offers anthropology radically opposed to contemporary ecologism, and it is worth stating this

clearly rather than apologetically. From Genesis onward, man is not merely one species among others, but a being created in the image of God, to whom dominion over the earth has been explicitly entrusted: ‘Fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’ (Genesis 1:28). This is not an embarrassing residue of a pre-scientific age, but the very foundation upon which Western civilisation, its sciences, its agriculture, and its prosperity were built. Until the cultural rupture of the 1960s, this hierarchical vision—God, then man, then the rest of creation—was the shared inheritance of European civilisation, Catholic, Protestant, and largely secular alike.

This dominion, properly understood, is not tyranny. It is responsibility. Man cultivates the garden; he transforms nature through his labour and his intelligence. The Hebrew verbs of Genesis—*kabash* (to subdue) and *radah* (to rule)—are strong words, and the tradition has never sought to soften them into a vague ‘stewardship’ in which man would merely tiptoe through a sacred wilderness. Rather, the earth exists for man, who in turn answers to God for its right use. The fields, the mines, the forests, the rivers harnessed for energy—these are the legitimate domain of human industry. To clear a forest to feed a family, to extract coal to lift a nation out of poverty, to drill for oil to power a civilisation, are not acts of desecration but acts proper to the human vocation.

Aristotle, though pre-Christian, arrived at a convergent conclusion through natural reason. In the *Politics*, he writes that ‘plants exist for the sake of animals, and the other animals for the sake of man’. Man stands at the summit of the natural order because he alone possesses reason. Aquinas, integrating Aristotle into Christian thought, made this teleology explicit: the lower orders of creation are ordered toward the higher, and ultimately toward man, who is himself ordered toward God. This is not anthropocentrism in the caricatural sense denounced by deep ecologists; it is simply the recognition of a hierarchy of being that was self-evident to almost every civilisation until very recently.

What has changed, and changed recently, is not the natural order itself but our cultural perception of it. Beginning in the 1960s, and accelerating through the following decades, a new sensibility took hold in the Western imagination: nature was no longer in the field of human action but its judge; no longer a gift to be cultivated but a sanctuary to be preserved from man. The forest became more sacred than the village, the wolf more deserving of protection than the shepherd, the ‘untouched’ wilderness more valuable than the cultivated countryside. This inversion has no precedent in two thousand years of European civilisation,

nor indeed in any agricultural society known to history. Farmers, miners, fishermen, foresters never held such views, and do not hold them now. The sacralisation of nature is, almost without exception, an urban ideology, professed by populations who no longer derive their living from the soil and who therefore mistake their aesthetic preferences for moral imperatives.

The neopagan biocentrism that animates much of today’s ecologism—the idea that Gaia has rights, that the biosphere has a moral standing equal or superior to humanity, that human flourishing must be constrained for the sake of ‘the planet’—is not a scientific position but a religious one. It is no accident that the rise of environmental ideology in the West has coincided with the collapse of Christian practice. The religious instinct does not disappear; it merely seeks new objects of worship.

For too long, conservatives have abandoned this rich tradition, surrendering environmental discourse to the Left. We have allowed the narrative to be rewritten: man as the enemy, energy as pollution, growth as destruction. This must stop. True ecology is human ecology—the protection of nature in the service of human flourishing, not the sacrifice of human prosperity at the altar of nature.

The Roots of the Disease THE IDEOLOGICAL GENEALOGY OF PROGRESSIVE ENVIRONMENTALISM

The founding error is Thomas Malthus’s 1798 *Essay on the Principle of Population*. Malthus prophesied collapse from unchecked population growth, establishing the intellectual template for all subsequent catastrophism. It is worth noting, not without a certain irony, that Malthus was himself an Anglican clergyman—and yet his bleak forecast stood in curious tension with the very tradition he was meant to serve. Malthus chose to place greater confidence in his own arithmetic—the famous contrast between geometric population growth and arithmetic agricultural growth—than in the wisdom, ingenuity, and adaptive capacity with which man has been endowed. Two centuries of history have vindicated that trust and refuted Malthus’s arithmetic—world population has grown roughly eightfold while living standards, life expectancy, and food supply per capita have risen to levels he would have judged impossible. Yet his intellectual heirs, from the Club of Rome to today’s degrowth movement, continue to repeat his essential error: substituting the narrow confidence of their own models for the broad confidence in human wisdom that the

older tradition, both Christian and classical, took for granted.

Paul Ehrlich’s *The Population Bomb* (1968) radicalised the discourse, predicting imminent global famine and advocating coercive population control. His vision was revived in the 1972 Club of Rome report, *The Limits to Growth*. This wholly mistaken perspective—including the predicted exhaustion of oil reserves by 2000—shows that models should never be

trusted, as they invariably confirm the prejudices of their creators.

Arne Naess’s deep ecology (1973) took, with others, the next step: the explicit rejection of human supremacy, the call for population reduction, the anti-industrial manifesto that became foun-

dational for radical environmentalism. In the 1980s and 1990s, as the Berlin Wall fell and Marxism lost its political home, the hatred of capitalism found a new refuge in environmentalism. Eco-socialism dressed the red revolution in green clothes.

Once one grasps that the underlying project is the contraction of human activity, the otherwise puzzling behaviour of the Green movement becomes perfectly intelligible—above all, its visceral and unrelenting hostility to nuclear energy. Nuclear power is an inexhaustible source of clean, dense, dispatchable energy. A serious environmentalist would be its first champion. Yet the Green movement has fought nuclear energy with passion—not for ecological reasons but ideological ones—because nuclear power would deliver precisely what the degrowth project cannot tolerate: *abundance*. A civilisation powered by uranium and, tomorrow, fusion is a civilisation in which the Malthusian premise collapses, in which scarcity ceases to be the master argument, in which billions of human beings can rise to prosperity without the planet noticing. Nuclear energy threatens the entire ideology of limits, and an ideology of limits is exactly what progressive environmentalism has become.

During my first thirty years at the Directorate General Energy, the real threats to the environment were sulphur dioxide and acid rain. Nobody was talking about CO₂ as the primary enemy. The shift from pollution-fighting to CO₂ obsession was a political choice, not a scientific necessity. Well-funded NGOs, often with opaque sources of support, shaped directly or indirectly EU energy policy. The anti-human character of modern eco-ideology is unmistakable: it places the spotted owl above the steelworker, the wilderness above the farmer, the abstract climate model above the concrete family struggling with energy bills.

**Energy is not pollution,
energy is civilisation;
growth is not destruction,
growth is the means by
which humanity protects
both itself and nature.**

Really Environmental Achievement WHAT EUROPE ACTUALLY ACCOMPLISHED

Let us return to facts. The genuine achievements of EU environmental policy before the Green Deal era are a source of pride for anyone who values results over rhetoric.

The Large Combustion Plant Directive (1988) targeted the real pollutants from power plants. By 2015, SO₂ emissions from large combustion plants fell by 81%, NO_x by 49%, and dust by 77%. The National Emission Ceilings Directive (2001) set binding national ceilings for SO₂, NO_x, VOCs, and ammonia, implementing the Gothenburg Protocol. By 2010, all member states met their SO₂ targets.

The EU Air Quality Framework Directive (1996) and its successors systematically eliminated toxic pollutants from EU air. The triumph of the Euro emission standards (Euro 1 through Euro 6) is a case study in technological progress: catalytic converters, partic-

“The Stone Age did not end for lack of stones.

ulate filters, and progressive tightening achieved a 96% reduction in key pollutants from 1992 levels. The Auto-Oil voluntary agreement—a market-based tool that the Greens abhor—achieved the elimination of sulphur from petrol, with dramatic benefits for children's health. The Greens reject voluntary agreements despite the evidence of their results: blood lead levels in children fell from ~60 µg/L in 1978 to below 15 µg/L in 2007; population exposure dropped from 88% to near 1%.

Acid rain, once a crisis, became a recovery story. The IPPC/IED directives imposed industrial emissions control through Best Available Techniques, achieving near-total elimination of pollutants from large industrial installations.

All of this was achieved without the Green Deal, without COP theatrics, without NGO, without the demonisation of fossil fuels, and without the destruction of EU industrial competitiveness. It was achieved by pragmatic, technology-driven, result-oriented legislation that addressed real pollution causing real harm to real people.

None of these achievements would have been remotely affordable to a poor continent. They are the

dividend of EU prosperity, paid in the only currency nature accepts: capital, technology, and time. A society that destroys its prosperity in the name of protecting nature has, by that very act, destroyed its capacity to protect nature. I am proud to have been part of that legacy.

The Great Statistical Illusion THERE IS NO 'ENERGY TRANSITION'

Now let us dismantle the foundational myth of the so-called energy transition with the only weapon that matters: data. Since the oil shocks of 1973, when the Western world collectively resolved to develop 'alternative energies', half a century of effort and trillions of dollars of investment have produced a remarkably modest result: wind and solar together still account for only 3% of global primary energy consumption (Energy Institute Statistical Review of World Energy, 2025) and around 5% within the EU. The successive initiatives by which the EU has sought to accelerate this so-called transition, and the heavy industrial and economic price EU has paid for them, are examined in detail in my book *Energy Insecurity: The Organised Destruction of the EU's Competitiveness*. After fifty years, the verdict is plain: what is presented as an energy transition is, in reality, no more than a marginal addition to a global energy system that remains, and will long remain, overwhelmingly fossil and nuclear.

Global primary energy consumption reached a record 620 exajoule in 2023. Fossil fuel consumption simultaneously hit a record 505 exajoule. Oil consumption exceeded 100 million barrels per day for the first time in history in 2023; in 2024 it exceeded 101 million barrels per day—new records while the EU celebrates its 'transition'. Coal consumption breached 165 exajoules in 2024—another record. China and India together account for 71% of global coal consumption; China's coal use grew 3%, India's 5%, while the EU reduced coal by 12%—a reduction more than offset in a matter of months by Asian growth.

The authoritative Statistical Review of World Energy, published by the Energy Institute, confirms that fossil fuels still met 86.7% of global energy demand in 2024—a share that has barely shifted in thirty years, despite three decades of climate conferences, international treaties, and ever more ambitious 'transition' plans. Global CO₂ emissions, far from declining, reached a new record of 37.8 gigatonnes in 2024. Every year brings a new record, and every year the gap widens between the rhetoric of EU decarbonisation and the reality of global energy consumption. The EU has dismantled large parts of its industrial base, driven up the cost of energy for its households and businesses, and weakened its strategic position vis-à-vis the United States, China, and the rest of Asia—all for a result that

is, on a planetary scale, statistically invisible. Yes, new renewable energy sources are growing, but over the last ten years fossil fuel demand has grown seven times more—demonstrating that renewables are adding to global energy demand rather than displacing it.

The Draghi report published in September 2024, acknowledges this troubling situation with honesty: the EU is falling behind the United States and China, its industry is being hollowed out, and its energy prices remain structurally two to three times higher than those of its competitors. Yet Mario Draghi does not dare to name the true cause. Nowhere does the report acknowledge that this loss of competitiveness is the direct and predictable consequence of the Net Zero policy itself—of the deliberate decision to dismantle reliable, affordable energy sources in pursuit of an ideological target. On the contrary, it is to pour yet more public money into the very policies that have produced the disease: hundreds of billions of euros in additional subsidies for wind, solar, hydrogen, and other so-called green technologies, all to be financed by European taxpayers and by new common debt. It is a remarkable spectacle—a diagnosis that stops just short of the truth, followed by a prescription that doubles the dose of the poison.

The arithmetic of this futility is sobering. The EU accounts for less than 7% of global CO₂ emissions, and its share is shrinking every year, not because it is succeeding but because the rest of the world is growing. Even if the EU were to reach zero emissions tomorrow, the annual growth of emissions in the developing world would replace the entire EU contribution within a handful of years. The EU is not saving the planet; it is merely impoverishing itself while the global energy system continues, perfectly rationally, to rely on the fuels that actually work: coal, oil, gas, and nuclear.

The EU has reduced its own CO₂ emissions since 1990, but let us analyse the causes: (1) renewable energy; (2) the integration of post-communist Eastern European states whose inefficient socialist industries were modernised—this 'statistical trick' inflates

apparent EU progress; (3) deindustrialisation—we emit less emissions because we produce less; (4) economic stagnation.

We are not witnessing an energy transition—we are witnessing an energy addition. The world needs more energy, and it is getting it from all sources simultaneously. The correct question is not 'how do we eliminate fossil fuels?' but 'how do we provide the energy the world needs while improving efficiency and reducing real pollution?' I warned of this already in my 2017 article "The Myth of a Fossil Fuel Phase-Out". The warning was ignored.

The Green Deal ANATOMY OF AN IDEOLOGICAL INSTRUMENT

The EU Green Deal is not an ecological project; it is an ideological construction.

Launched in December 2019 by Ursula von der Leyen—a CDU conservative, with Frans Timmermans of the Party of European Socialists as its executive champion—the Green Deal was a response to the Green wave in the 2019 EU elections. Climate neutrality by 2050 was enshrined as a civilisation-
al objective,

embedded in legally binding EU Climate Law. The ratchet mechanism compels evermore ambitious measures, transforming decarbonisation from a policy choice into a legal commitment.

The legislative arsenal is formidable: nearly 160 acts, including the Fit for 55 package (55% emission reduction by 2030 from 1990 levels and 90% by 2040), the EU ETS reform (62% reduction by 2030 versus 2005 for covered sectors), the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), the REPowerEU plan (€300 billion), the Nature Restoration Law (restoring 20% of EU land and sea by 2030), the Farm to Fork strategy, and the ban on internal combustion engines automotive by 2035. The last is the single most damaging industrial policy decision in EU history, eliminating the technology foundation of the

Due Diligence Directive, known as CS3D, adopted in July 2024. Under its original provisions, large EU companies—and, by extension, any non-EU company that wished to do business with them—were required to identify, prevent, and report on adverse human rights and environmental impacts throughout their entire chain of activities, from the extraction of raw materials to the final disposal of products. An EU manufacturer would have had to interrogate its suppliers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America on their carbon emissions, their labour practices, their water usage, and a long list of ESG criteria, and to demonstrate to EU regulators that this surveillance had been duly performed. Non-compliance exposed EU companies to civil liability, and to penalties calibrated as a percentage of worldwide turnover.

“There is no rich country with a degraded environment, and no poor country with a protected one.

continent’s largest manufacturing sector without a viable replacement. The automotive sector value fell by €70 billion (9%) in 2024 alone.

Farm to Fork is the agricultural component of the ideological dismantlement. The 2024 farmers’ protests across the EU—tractors in Brussels—were not a coincidence; they were the rational response of people whose livelihoods were being destroyed by regulations designed in Brussels offices without knowledge of how farming works. This very same day in the same city, the European Commission adopted the objective of 90% CO₂ reduction by 2040.

The REPowerEU paradox is breathtaking: the war in Ukraine revealed the catastrophic vulnerability created by decades of green ideology (Germany’s EnergieWende, the closure of nuclear plants, the dependence on Russian gas). Instead of correcting the error, Brussels used the crisis to accelerate the very policies that caused it, relabelling the Green Deal as a security strategy. This is a remarkable instance of intellectual evasion in recent EU policy.

NGOs have played a decisive role: the documented influence of environmental NGOs on Commission proposals, the revolving door between green advocacy and EU institutions, the capture of regulatory processes by ideologically motivated actors.

Among the most revealing instruments of this self-inflicted decline is the Corporate Sustainability

The pretension was breathtaking. The EU, which represents a declining share of global trade and an even smaller share of global production, was claiming the right to impose its environmental and social preferences on sovereign producers in countries that had not asked for its guidance, and that are pursuing their own legitimate path to development. African mining companies, Indian textile manufacturers, Indonesian palm-oil producers, Brazilian agribusiness—all were expected to align their internal practices with norms drafted in Brussels by officials who have never set foot in their factories or on their land. The directive was, in effect, an extraterritorial extension of European regulation, an exercise in moral imperialism that no rising economic power would tolerate for a moment if the roles were reversed.

The reaction was swift, and revealing. EU businesses protested, third countries objected, and within months even the political figures who had championed such directives began to retreat. At the Choose France summit in May 2025, President Macron declared that the CS3D and similar regulations had to be “put off the table” altogether; Chancellor Merz, the following month, announced that Germany would repeal its own transposition law and called on the Union to do the same. Under this pressure, the Commission’s “Omnibus I” simplification package, agreed in late 2025 and brought into force in

March 2026, has substantially gutted the directive: its application has been postponed to July 2029, its scope reduced to companies of more than 5,000 employees and €1.5 billion in turnover, the obligation to adopt a climate transition plan has been removed, the harmonised EU civil-liability regime has been dropped, and the maximum penalty capped at 3% of global turnover. CS3D has not, in truth, been abolished—it has been hollowed out, quietly and without public reckoning (see my analysis in *The European Conservative*).

This trajectory is instructive. A directive whose ideological ambition was clear from the outset, voted into law with enthusiasm by the European Parliament, has had to be dismantled piece by piece within eighteen months of its adoption—not because its proponents have changed their minds, but because reality intervened. The competitiveness gap with the United States and China became too visible to ignore; the diplomatic costs with the Global South too high to bear; the protests of EU industry too loud to dismiss. And yet no one in Brussels has drawn the obvious conclusion: that the entire approach—the conviction that the EU can regulate the moral conduct of the world from its offices in the Berlaymont building—was misconceived from the start. CS3D will doubtless return in another form, under another name, with the same underlying ambition. It is, in miniature, the whole tragedy of contemporary European environmental policy—a costly gesture, addressed primarily to its own conscience, paid for by the competitiveness of its industry, and producing no measurable improvement anywhere on earth.

The fundamental contradiction is now undeniable: the Green Deal claims to be a growth and competitiveness strategy, but every independent analysis—including the Commission’s own Draghi Report—confirms it is destroying EU competitiveness. Von der Leyen’s own appointed expert wrote the indictment of her flagship policy.

Demographic Declines and the Ideology of Anthropic Guilt A CRISIS OF HUMAN CONFIDENCE

The accelerating decline in birth rates across the developed world constitutes one of the most consequential civilisational shifts of the contemporary era. Europe is ageing rapidly. Germany, in 2025, recorded one million deaths against a mere 352,000 births. These figures are symptomatic of a profound collapse in humanity’s trust in its own future.

The roots of this demographic retreat are primarily ideological. Over recent decades, a convergence of environmentalist, egalitarian, and post-modern worldviews has systematically eroded the

foundational belief that human life is inherently valuable, that progress is achievable, and that the challenges facing each successive generation can and will be overcome.

Central to this erosion is the ecological framing of human beings as inherently destructive agents. The propagation of the idea that having children constitutes an act of ecological harm represents a radical inversion of humanist values. This neo-Malthusian premise, despite being consistently refuted by empirical evidence, has permeated educational institutions, media discourse, and popular culture. The catastrophic predictions advanced fifty years ago by Paul Ehrlich, and the Club of Rome never materialised. Yet these failed prophecies retain their psychological grip, having successfully instilled a generalised anxiety about humanity’s presence on Earth.

This represents a fundamental misreading of the human condition. As the famous Julian Simon argued in *The Ultimate Resource* (1981), the defining characteristic of human civilisation is its capacity to innovate beyond apparent limits. The Stone Age did not end for lack of stones. Every era of apparent scarcity has ultimately yielded to human creativity, technological development, and adaptive capacity. Jean Bodin’s sixteenth-century observation – “there is no wealth but men”—retains its full force today.

The demographic crisis is, therefore, at its core, a crisis of hope. According to Hannah Arendt, every birth brings a new person into the world who has the capacity to begin something unexpected and original, with effects that cannot be fully predicted in advance. It is a positive and enthusiastic vision of humanity and the future—one that I deeply share. A civilisation that has lost confidence in human resilience, which has ceased to believe in mankind’s ability to confront and surmount adversity, will inevitably cease to reproduce itself.

The Geopolitical Trap WHO PROFITS FROM EU DEINDUSTRIALISATION?

Who benefits from the EU’s green doctrine? The answer is as clear as it is damning.

China is the overwhelming beneficiary of the Green Deal’s implementation. China produces over 80% of the world’s solar panels and controls 90% of solar photovoltaic modules in the EU market; over 95% of solar panels installed in the EU are imported from China. China manufactures approximately 65% of global wind turbines. China controls nearly 85% of global battery cell production capacity, 90% of cathode active material, and 98% of anode active material manufacturing.

71% global coal consumption share held jointly by China and India	3% share of global primary energy consumption from wind and solar combined (2025)	~5% share of EU primary energy consumption from wind and solar	86.7% share of global energy demand met by fossil fuels in 2024	37.8 GIGATONNES global CO ₂ emissions record reached in 2024
620 EXAJOULES record global primary energy consumption reached in 2023	505 EXAJOULES record fossil fuel consumption reached in 2023	100+ MILLION BARRELS PER DAY global oil consumption, first time in history, 2023	101+ MILLION BARRELS PER DAY global oil consumption in 2024	165+ EXAJOULES global coal consumption record reached in 2024
<7% the EU's share of global CO ₂ emissions	66% increase in global CO ₂ emissions over thirty years of COP negotiations	81% reduction in SO ₂ emissions from large combustion plants by 2015	49% reduction in NO _x emissions from large combustion plants by 2015	77% reduction in dust emissions from large combustion plants by 2015
96% reduction in key pollutants from 1992 levels achieved by Euro emission standards (Euro 1-6)	>80% share of world's solar panels produced by China	>90% share of solar photovoltaic modules in the EU market controlled by China	>95% share of solar panels installed in the EU that are imported from China	~65% share of global wind turbines manufactured by China

~85% share of global battery cell production capacity controlled by China	90% share of cathode active material production controlled by China	98% share of anode active material manufacturing controlled by China	>90% share of global rare earth processing controlled by China	90% share of global graphite processing controlled by China
60-70% share of global lithium processing controlled by China	80% share of cobalt controlled by China through DRC mining investments	50% how much lower Chinese solar PV manufacturing costs are compared to Europe	40% how much lower Chinese battery pack costs are compared to Europe	20% how much lower Chinese wind turbine costs are compared to Europe
€70 BILLION (9%) decline in automotive sector value in the EU in 2024	~160 ACTS the legislative arsenal of the EU Green Deal	55% targeted EU emission reduction by 2030 (Fit for 55, from 1990 levels)	90% targeted EU emission reduction by 2040	62% targeted EU ETS reduction by 2030 versus 2005 for covered sectors
€300 BILLION the REPowerEU plan budget	20% target share of EU land and sea to be restored under the Nature Restoration Law by 2030	750 MILLION PEOPLE still lacking electricity access globally (2023, IEA)	2.1 BILLION PEOPLE still cooking with polluting solid fuels	3.2 MILLION premature deaths annually from indoor air pollution caused by solid fuel cooking

The critical mineral dependency is even more acute: China controls over 90% of rare earth processing, 90% of graphite processing, 60–70% of lithium processing, and 80% of cobalt through its mining investments in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Manufacturing costs for solar PVs in China are 50% lower than in Europe, battery packs 40% lower, wind turbines 20% lower—the Green Deal is a massive industrial subsidy program for China.

China has already demonstrated a willingness to weaponise this dependency, implementing export controls on graphite, germanium, and threatening restrictions on rare earths. Europe has made itself a geopolitical hostage.

Russia's historical role is equally revealing. NATO's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen explicitly stated in 2014 that Russia had been covertly funding EU environmental NGOs to oppose shale gas development and fracking, maintaining EU dependence on Russian gas. The irony is perfect—Europe's anti-fracking movement, funded by Moscow, helped create the gas dependency that led to the 2022 energy crisis.

The US LNG windfall is the other side of the coin. Post-Nord Stream, American LNG exporters captured a massive share of the EU gas market. The destruction of EU energy independence through ideological green policies created a lucrative market for American gas exporters. The US Inflation Reduction Act simultaneously attracted EU green industries to relocate to America. While EU member states import US LNG, they are not even prospecting to determine whether they hold shale gas reserves of their own.

The kerosene crisis is the logical endpoint: EU refining capacity has been systematically sacrificed to green ideology. The EU no longer controls its own aviation fuel supply; Lufthansa's flight cancellations announcements due to kerosene shortages are a direct consequence of two decades of deliberate neglect of refining infrastructure under ecological pressure. The Gulf countries, by contrast, invested heavily in modern refining.

Prosperity is the best environmental policy THE CASE FOR ENERGY ABUNDANCE

The central claim of this essay can now be stated empirically: there is no rich country with a degraded environment, and no poor country with a protected

one. This is not a slogan; it is the most robust correlation in environmental science.

Deforestation and energy poverty are linked in a way that ecologists refuse to acknowledge: people without modern energy destroy forests for cooking and heating. Expanding access to natural gas and electricity is the most effective deforestation prevention policy ever conceived. Energy abundance is pro-nature, not anti-nature. IEA data show 750 million people are still lacking electricity access in 2023. The 2.1 billion people still cooking with

polluting solid fuels suffer 3.2 million premature deaths annually—this is the real environmental emergency, not the CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere.

The Environmental Kuznets Curve is the empirical relationship that every serious ecologist should know: as per capita income rises, pollution first increases, then decreases. Economic

prosperity provides the means and the motivation for environmental improvement. Wealthy societies invest in cleaner technologies because they can afford to. The lesson for policy is clear: growth is the solution, not the problem.

Energy and human welfare are inseparable. There is a direct correlation between energy access and life expectancy, literacy, infant mortality, and poverty reduction. Degrowth, by contrast, is a luxury ideology—comfortable academics proposing civilisational contraction for a world where billions still aspire to basic prosperity. Capping or reducing GDP in rich countries would require the immiseration of the West without solving global poverty.

CO₂ fertilisation and global greening are facts, not fantasies. Satellite data show significant increases in global vegetation over recent decades, largely attributed to higher atmospheric CO₂. The agronomic evidence is clear: CO₂ acts as a fertiliser for plant growth. The point is not to dismiss environmental concerns but to insist on balanced, evidence-based analysis rather than catastrophist ideology.

The US shale gas revolution is the unplanned environmental success of our time: American CO₂ emissions fell dramatically in the 2010s not because of a Green Deal but because shale gas replaced coal in power generation. This is what technological innovation achieves—more energy, lower pollution, greater prosperity—the exact opposite of the degrowth prescription. Technology, not restriction, is the most effective path to environmental improvement.

The geopolitical reading 1973 vs. 2026

History is the best teacher, if only we are willing to learn. In 1973, the European Community responded to the oil shock with an offensive strategy: increase domestic energy supply, diversify sources (coal, nuclear, natural gas), promote technological innovation, reduce dependence on a single supplier. The result was the extraordinary build-out of nuclear power in France and the modernisation of European energy systems. The Messina Resolution principle (1955) was honoured: abundant and cheap energy as the foundation of European prosperity.

In 2022, the European Union responded to the energy crisis caused partly by its own Green Deal policies (the premature closure of German nuclear plants, the under-investment in domestic gas production, the dependence on Russian gas) not by correcting the error but by accelerating it through REPowerEU.

While the EU debates wind vs. nuclear in the abstract, billions are being invested in hydrocarbon production in the United States, Israel, Australia, Canada, and Africa—everywhere except the EU. Strategic alliances between the UAE and Azerbaijan, between Italy and Libya, are reshaping the global energy map. The EU is absent from these new geopolitical realities.

The world that emerges from this analysis is not one in which the EU is leading the energy transition. It is one in which it is following a self-imposed ideology while its competitors capture the markets, the industries, and the geopolitical advantages of abundant energy.

THE CONSERVATIVE FAILURE AND THE PATH TO RECOVERY

Let us speak frankly about the failure of conservative parties to resist the green ideology. For two decades, conservative parties across the EU have adopted





The chain is short and unbreakable: energy produces prosperity, prosperity produces stewardship, and stewardship produces a protected nature. Break the first link and the rest collapses.

Photo by Daniil Peshkov | Dreamstime.com

green rhetoric out of fear of being labelled “climate deniers” or “not taking care of next-generation” or “anti-nature”. This capitulation was intellectually dishonest, politically cowardly, and practically catastrophic.

The mechanism of capture was simple: the climate issue was framed as a moral choice between good and evil, making rational cost-benefit analysis politically radioactive. Conservatives who questioned the economics of the energy transition were immediately labelled as enemies of the planet or even fascists. This rhetorical trap was brilliantly constructed, and conservatives walked into it.

Ursula von der Leyen is the paradigmatic case: a conservative politician who made the most radical green policy agenda in EU history her signature achievement. Its party, the EPP’s, complicity in the destruction of EU industry in the name of climate virtue-signalling is a stain on the party’s legacy.

The clearest symptom of this capture is the conservative silence on nuclear energy. A party that genuinely believed in prosperity, in industry, in national sovereignty, and in the protection of nature would have made the defence and expansion of nuclear power its signature cause for the last twenty years. Instead, mainstream EU conservatism has either tolerated the ‘German Ausstieg’, or actively participated in it, or—at best—paid nuclear occasional verbal homage while favouring for every regulation that strangles it.

The time has come to reverse the narrative: *the alternative is not anti-environmentalism but a human ecology grounded in prosperity, technology, and human dignity*. Man is not the problem, man is the solution; energy is not pollution, energy is civilisation; growth is not destruction, growth is the means by which humanity protects both itself and nature.

The intellectual tools are available: the philosophical tradition of stewardship (Aristotle, Aquinas, Benedict XVI), the economic evidence of the Environmental Kuznets Curve, the statistical reality of the “energy addition” rather than transition, the documented success of technology-driven environmental improvement, the catastrophic failures of ideological green policy.

Political courage is required. Conservatives must be willing to say that the Green Deal has failed, that the energy transition as conceived is a geopolitical and economic catastrophe, and that the alternative is the human ecology defended throughout this essay.

The BP and Shell lesson is instructive: even the oil companies that tried to rebrand themselves as green energy companies have retreated to their core business because the numbers simply do not work. If the largest and most motivated corporate actors in the world could not make the renewable energy business profitable without public financial support, the ideology has a fundamental problem with economic reality.

“Prosperity is not nature’s adversary. It is nature’s most reliable patron.”

The COP theatre is the final act: thirty years of annual theatrical productions yielding an increase of 66% in global CO₂ emissions. The COP negotiations are a diplomatic ritual disconnected from energy reality; the same countries that sign solemn declarations in November resume building coal plants in December.

Conclusion FOR A HUMAN ECOLOGY

Let us return to the title and the core thesis: “human ecology” is not a contradiction in terms—it is the only coherent framework for environmental responsibility.

Human ecology places the human person—in his dignity, his creativity, his social bonds, his need for prosperity and freedom—at the centre of any environmental analysis. It recognises a reciprocity that progressive ecologism has buried: nature serves human flourishing, and human flourishing in turn serves nature. The chain is short and unbreakable: energy produces prosperity, prosperity produces stewardship, and stewardship produces a protected nature. Break the first link and the rest collapses. The wise man plants trees he will never sit beneath; he cleans rivers his grandfathers polluted; he sets aside national parks his ancestors could not have spared an acre for; he funds the research that abates pollutants no peasant economy could even measure. Prosperity is not nature’s adversary. It is nature’s most reliable patron—and energy abundance, above all nuclear, is the foundation of both. ▀



Samuel Furfari

Chemical engineer and professor,
former Directorate-General for Energy
of the European Commission



LAUDATO SI

Integral Ecology - Chapter IV

Pope Francis

Since everything is closely interrelated, and today's problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an *integral ecology*, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions.

ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ECOLOGY

Ecology studies the relationship between living organisms and the environment in which they develop. This necessarily entails reflection and debate about the conditions required for the life and survival of society, and the honesty needed to question certain models of development, production and consumption. It cannot be

emphasized enough how everything is interconnected. Time and space are not independent of one another, and not even atoms or subatomic particles can be considered in isolation. Just as the different aspects of the planet – physical, chemical

Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others.

and biological – are interrelated, so too living species are part of a network which we will never fully explore and understand. A good part of our genetic code is shared by many living beings. It follows that the fragmentation of knowledge and the isolation

of bits of information can actually become a form of ignorance, unless they are integrated into a broader vision of reality.

When we speak of the “environment”, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behaviour patterns, and the ways it grasps reality. Given the scale of change, it is no longer possible to find a specific, discrete answer for each part of the problem. It is essential to seek comprehensive solutions which

consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems. We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.

Due to the number and variety of factors to be taken into account when determining the environmental impact of a concrete undertaking, it is essential to give researchers their due role, to facilitate their in-

water, controlling illnesses and epidemics, forming soil, breaking down waste, and in many other ways which we overlook or simply do not know about. Once they become conscious of this, many people realize that we live and act on the basis of a reality which has previously been given to us, which precedes our existence and our abilities. So, when we speak of “sustainable use”, consideration must always be given to each ecosystem’s regenerative ability in its different areas and aspects.

Economic growth, for its part, tends to produce predictable reactions and a certain standardization with the aim of

between ecosystems and between the various spheres of social interaction, demonstrating yet again that “the whole is greater than the part”.

If everything is related, then the health of a society’s institutions has consequences for the environment and the quality of human life. “Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment”. In this sense, social ecology is necessarily institutional, and gradually extends to the whole of society, from the primary social group, the family, to the wider local, national and international communities. Within each social stratum, and between

“We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it.”

teraction, and to ensure broad academic freedom. Ongoing research should also give us a better understanding of how different creatures relate to one another in making up the larger units which today we term “ecosystems”. We take these systems into account not only to determine how best to use them, but also because they have an intrinsic value independent of their usefulness. Each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself; the same is true of the harmonious ensemble of organisms existing in a defined space and functioning as a system. Although we are often not aware of it, we depend on these larger systems for our own existence. We need only recall how ecosystems interact in dispersing carbon dioxide, purifying

simplifying procedures and reducing costs. This suggests the need for an “economic ecology” capable of appealing to a broader vision of reality. The protection of the environment is in fact “an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it”. We urgently need a humanism capable of bringing together the different fields of knowledge, including economics, in the service of a more integral and integrating vision. Today, the analysis of environmental problems cannot be separated from the analysis of human, family, work-related and urban contexts, nor from how individuals relate to themselves, which leads in turn to how they relate to others and to the environment. There is an interrelation

them, institutions develop to regulate human relationships. Anything which weakens those institutions has negative consequences, such as injustice, violence and loss of freedom. A number of countries have a relatively low level of institutional effectiveness, which results in greater problems for their people while benefiting those who profit from this situation. Whether in the administration of the state, the various levels of civil society, or relationships between individuals themselves, lack of respect for the law is becoming more common. Laws may be well framed yet remain a dead letter. Can we hope, then, that in such cases, legislation and regulations dealing with the environment will really prove effective? We know, for

example, that countries which have clear legislation about the protection of forests continue to keep silent as they watch laws repeatedly being broken. Moreover, what takes place in any one area can have a direct or indirect influence on other areas. Thus, for example, drug use in affluent societies creates a continual and growing demand for products imported from poorer regions, where behaviour is corrupted, lives are destroyed, and the environment continues to deteriorate.

CULTURAL ECOLOGY

Together with the patrimony of nature, there is also an historic, artistic and cultural patrimony which is likewise under threat. This patrimony is a part of the shared identity of each place and a foundation upon which to build a habitable city. It is not a matter of tearing down and building new cities, supposedly more respectful of the environment yet not always more attractive to live in. Rather, there is a need to incorporate the history, culture and architecture of each place, thus preserving its original identity. Ecology, then, also involves protecting the cultural treasures of humanity in the broadest sense. More specifically, it calls for greater attention to local cultures when studying environmental problems, favouring a dialogue between scientific-technical language and the language of the people. Culture is more than what we have inherited from the past; it is also, and above all, a living, dynamic and participatory present reality, which cannot be excluded as we rethink the relationship between human beings and the environment.

A consumerist vision of human beings, encouraged by the mechanisms of today’s globalized economy, has a levelling effect on cultures, diminishing the immense variety which is the heritage of all humanity. Attempts to resolve all problems through uniform regulations or technical interventions can lead to overlooking the complexities of local problems which demand the active participation of all members of the community. New processes taking shape cannot always fit into frameworks imported from outside; they need to be based in the local culture itself. As life and the world are dynamic realities, so our care for the world must also be flexible and dynamic. Merely technical solutions run the risk of addressing symptoms and not the more serious underlying problems. There is a need to respect the rights of peoples and cultures, and to appreciate that the development of a social group presupposes an historical process which takes place within a cultural context and demands the constant and active involvement of local people *from within their proper culture*. Nor can the notion of the quality of life be imposed from without, for quality of life must be understood within the world of symbols and customs proper to each human group.

Many intensive forms of environmental exploitation and degradation not only exhaust the resources which provide local communities with their livelihood, but also undo the social structures which, for a long time, shaped cultural identity and their sense of the meaning of life and community. The disappearance of a culture can be just as serious, or even more serious, than the disappearance of

a species of plant or animal. The imposition of a dominant lifestyle linked to a single form of production can be just as harmful as the altering of ecosystems.

In this sense, it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best. Nevertheless, in various parts of the world, pressure is being put on them to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture.

ECOLOGY OF DAILY LIFE

Authentic development includes efforts to bring about an integral improvement in the quality of human life, and this entails considering the setting in which people live their lives. These settings influence the way we think, feel and act. In our rooms, our homes, our workplaces and neighbourhoods, we use our environment as a way of expressing our identity. We make every effort to adapt to our environment, but when it is disorderly, chaotic or saturated with noise and ugliness, such overstimulation makes it difficult to find ourselves integrated and happy.

An admirable creativity and generosity is shown by persons and groups who respond

to environmental limitations by alleviating the adverse effects of their surroundings and learning to orient their lives amid disorder and uncertainty. For example, in some places, where the façades of buildings are derelict, people show great care for the interior of their homes, or find contentment in the kindness and friendliness of others. A wholesome social life can light up a seemingly undesirable environment. At times a commendable human ecology is practised by the poor despite numerous hardships. The feeling of asphyxiation brought on by densely populated residential areas is countered if close and warm relationships develop, if communities are created, if the limitations of the environment are compensated for in the interior of each person who feels held within a network of solidarity and belonging. In this way, any place can turn from being a hell on earth into the setting for a dignified life.

The extreme poverty experienced in areas lacking harmony, open spaces or potential for integration, can lead to incidents of brutality and to exploitation by criminal organizations. In the unstable neighbourhoods of mega-cities, the daily experience of overcrowding and social anonymity can create a sense of uprootedness which spawns antisocial behaviour and violence. Nonetheless, I wish to insist that love always proves more powerful. Many people in these conditions are able to weave bonds of belonging and togetherness which convert overcrowding into an experience of community in which the walls of the ego are torn down and the barriers of selfishness overcome. This experience of a communitarian salvation often



Photo by Ilia Bronskiy on Unsplash

generates creative ideas for the improvement of a building or a neighbourhood.

Given the interrelationship between living space and human behaviour, those who design buildings, neighbourhoods, public spaces and cities, ought to draw on the various disciplines which help us to understand people's thought processes, symbolic language and ways of acting. It is not enough to seek the beauty of design. More precious still is the service we offer to another kind of beauty: people's quality of life, their adaptation to the environment, encounter and mutual assistance. Here too, we see how important it is that urban planning always take into consideration the views of those who will live in these areas.

There is also a need to protect those common areas, visual landmarks and urban landscapes which increase our sense of belonging, of rootedness, of "feeling at home" within a city which includes us and brings us together. It is important that the different parts of a city be well integrated and that those who live there have a sense of the whole, rather than being confined to one neighbourhood and failing to see the larger city as space which they share with others. Interventions which affect the urban or rural landscape should take into account how various elements combine to form a whole which is perceived by its inhabitants as a coherent and meaningful framework for their lives. Others will then no longer be seen as strangers, but as part of a "we" which all of us are working to create. For this

same reason, in both urban and rural settings, it is helpful to set aside some places which can be preserved and protected from constant changes brought by human intervention.

Lack of housing is a grave problem in many parts of the world, both in rural areas and in large cities, since state budgets usually cover only a small portion of the demand. Not only the poor, but many other members of society as well, find it difficult to own a home. Having a home has much to do with a sense of personal dignity and the growth

We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.

of families. This is a major issue for human ecology. In some places, where makeshift shanty towns have sprung up, this will mean developing those neighbourhoods rather than razing or displacing them. When the poor live in unsanitary slums or in dangerous tenements, "in cases where it is necessary to relocate them, in order not to heap suffering upon suffering, adequate information needs to be given beforehand, with choices of decent housing offered, and the people directly involved must be part of the process". At the same time, creativity should be shown in integrating rundown

neighbourhoods into a welcoming city: "How beautiful those cities which overcome paralyzing mistrust, integrate those who are different and make this very integration a new factor of development! How attractive are those cities which, even in their architectural design, are full of spaces which connect, relate and favour the recognition of others!"

The quality of life in cities has much to do with systems of transport, which are often a source of much suffering for those who use them. Many cars, used by one or more people, circulate in cities, causing traffic congestion, raising the level of pollution, and consuming enormous quantities of non-renewable energy. This makes it necessary to build more roads and parking areas which spoil the urban landscape. Many specialists agree on the need to give priority to public transportation. Yet some measures needed will not prove easily acceptable to society unless substantial improve-

ments are made in the systems themselves, which in many cities force people to put up with undignified conditions due to crowding, inconvenience, infrequent service and lack of safety.

Respect for our dignity as human beings often jars with the chaotic realities that people have to endure in city life. Yet this should not make us overlook the abandonment and neglect also experienced by some rural populations which lack access to essential services and where some workers are reduced to conditions of servitude, without rights or even the hope of a more dignified life.

Human ecology also implies another profound reality: the relationship between human life and the moral law, which is inscribed in our nature and is necessary for the creation of a more dignified environment. Pope Benedict XVI spoke of an “ecology of man”, based on the fact that “man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will”. It is

enough to recognize that our body itself establishes us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings. The acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation. Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology. Also, valuing one’s own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different. In this way we can joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator, and find mutual enrichment. It is not a healthy attitude which would seek “to cancel out sexual

difference because it no longer knows how to confront it”.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE COMMON GOOD

An integral ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good, a central and unifying principle of social ethics. The common good is “the sum of those conditions

society and the development of a variety of intermediate groups, applying the principle of subsidiarity. Outstanding among those groups is the family, as the basic cell of society. Finally, the common good calls for social peace, the stability and security provided by a certain order which cannot be achieved without particular concern for distributive justice; whenever this is violated, violence always ensues. Society as a whole, and the state in particular, are obliged to defend and promote the common good.

In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters. This option entails recognizing the implications of the universal desti-

nation of the world’s goods, but, as I mentioned in the Apostolic Exhortation, it demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of our deepest convictions as believers. We need only look around us to see that, today, this option is in fact an ethical imperative essential for effectively attaining the common good.

of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment”.

Underlying the principle of the common good is respect for the human person as such, endowed with basic and inalienable rights ordered to his or her integral development. It has also to do with the overall welfare of



Photo by The Cleveland Museum of Art on Unsplash

JUSTICE BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS

The notion of the common good also extends to future generations. The global economic crises have made painfully obvious the detrimental effects of disregarding our common destiny, which cannot exclude those who come after us. We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must

What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? This question not only concerns the environment in isolation; the issue cannot be approached piecemeal. When we ask ourselves what kind of world we want to leave behind, we think in the first place of its general direction, its meaning and its values. Unless we struggle with these deeper issues, I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results. But if these issues are courageously faced, we are led inexorably to ask other pointed questions: What is the purpose of

desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet’s capacity that 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. The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now. We need to reflect on our accountability before those who will have to endure the dire consequences.

Our difficulty in taking up this challenge seriously has much to do with an ethical and cultural decline which has accompanied the deterioration of the environment. Men and women of our postmodern world run the risk of rampant individualism, and many problems of society are connected with today’s self-centred culture of instant gratification. We see this in the crisis of family and social ties and the difficulties of recognizing the other. Parents can be prone to impulsive and wasteful consumption, which then affects their children who find it increasingly difficult to acquire a home of their own and build a family. Furthermore, our inability to think seriously about future generations is linked to our inability to broaden the scope of our present interests and to give consideration to those who remain excluded from development. Let us not only keep the poor of the future in mind, but also today’s poor, whose life on this earth is brief and who cannot keep on waiting. Hence, “in addition to a fairer sense of intergenerational solidarity there is also an urgent moral need for a renewed sense of intragenerational solidarity”. ▀

“Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment.

share with others. Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us. The Portuguese bishops have called upon us to acknowledge this obligation of justice: “The environment is part of a logic of receptivity. It is on loan to each generation, which must then hand it on to the next”. An integral ecology is marked by this broader vision.

our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us? It is no longer enough, then, simply to state that we should be concerned for future generations. We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity. Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn.

Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris,



Photo by Patrick Gillespie on Unsplash

A CONSERVATIVE ECOLOGICAL PROGRAM FOR THE MODERN WORLD

Thibault Muzergues

Home advantage is a term that is most often associated with sports, but it also works in politics: each party or political family indeed enjoys a home advantage when the debate turns on some issues which they own, giving them a competitive edge during election time. For example, if the discussions during the election period are about lack of housing or social issues in general, the left plays on home turf, while when it comes to immigration, it is usually the right that enjoys a competitive edge. That is because each camp is associated with having a clear vision on a certain issue, which in turn makes it more credible to the voters – hence an advantage equivalent to a football team playing at home with its supporters rooting for it, and trying to influence the referee at each corner (note: it's always done because it often works).

Note though that there is no natural advantage. Take, for example, the economy: historically, the right has been seen at ease when campaigns turned around these issues (think of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan for example). In the UK, however, after the 1992 sterling crisis, the Tories lost their economic reputation and Tony Blair was subsequently able to turn

the tables and make the Labour Party the most credible actor in British politics on all things economic. This lasted for 15 years, and it took a long time (and the 2008 financial crisis) to turn the tide again in the favor of the Right.

Could conservatives then claim leadership on the environment and make this not a difficult issue for them to tackle (as it is now) but one that actually gives them a competitive edge over their political rivals? The proposition could seem far-fetched... After all, the left literally owns this thematic, and the polarization that our societies

are currently going through is precisely including the environment (or rather global warming the Green Deal) as a wedge issue that defines the identity of our left vs. right debate: to caricature,

Conservatives put the human first, because they are aware that in reality, the planet can take care of itself.

if you love the bees and the trees, and if you want to regulate the economy to save the planet, then you're on the left – if you love the economy and see said regulations as a dangerous break on human development (or to go even more in the caricature, if you think that climate change is a hoax), then you're from the right.

This is obviously a false accusation – or rather, a cliché, but it also encapsulates the challenge that the right is facing today: when it comes to ecology, conservatives are definitely not playing on home turf, and

leaving this ground to their adversary is something that is done at their own risk, as the 2019 European election campaign showed. People do care about the environment, and even though it is not as central a question as, say, unemployment or immigration, it does become a defining issue every once in a while, with enormous consequences not only for the election, but also for the country – again, the 2019 EU election and its incidence on the contents of the European Green Deal comes to mind.

THE SEARCH FOR THE LOST GREEN CONSERVATIVE BEGINS...

But how on earth could conservatives claim some sort of leadership on an issue like the environment? For a start, they should stop believing that this is a historic property of the left, because all of the evidence points to the contrary. Let us remember that the first environmentalist politics were *conservationist* in nature, and therefore *conservative*. Many have forgotten it, but the first national parks in the United States, created under Ulysses Grant and then expanded by Teddy Roosevelt, were Republican inventions – and the governments that implemented similar policies in Europe were also conservatives – some worthy of name (General De Gaulle created the Vanoise National Park, the first of its kind in France 1963), others less so (the first national park in Italy, the Gran Paradiso, was created by Benito Mussolini in 1922 – as perhaps an irony of history, even though they were on different sides during World War II, both men's conservation projects were complementary: the Vanoise is situated exactly on the other side of the Franco-Italian border, and its creation extended the protection of this extremely beautiful corner of the Alps, almost doubling it in size).

Even getting to more modern (and perhaps less controversial) politics, the environment has also been a concern of the right after the Second World War. In the United States, the Environmental Protection Agency (or EPA), so criticized by conservatives these days for its bureaucratization and ideological bias (not always for wrong reasons) was actually created by a Republican administration – that of Richard Nixon, in December 1970. And the first major speech by a head of state warning about the consequences of climate change was given by Margaret Thatcher, hardly a communist lunatic, in 1989. That year, the Berlin wall fell,

and with it the sirens of communism, which had found that internally, one of its strongest foes was ecology: a rallying cry for patriots and anticommunists in the Baltic states, Ukraine and so many other dissidents in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to save their homeland's environment against the dehumanization and the environmental (as well as social) engineering carried by the Socialist project.

Let us be honest: there is absolutely no reason why people on the right, may they be conservative, Christian democrats or even populist, should not care about the environment, and even less reasons why they should not have an environmental agenda. Indeed, there have been attempts, often in the late 2000s and early 2010s, to put in place a green conservative agenda – think of Nathalie Kosciuszko-Morizet's *Grenelle de l'environnement* in France, or David Cameron's Green Agenda for the Conservative party, and the reason that they failed was that their starting point was too often associated with what the left wanted.

Indeed, the reason why the left has been able not only to make the environment a home turf issue but one on which they enjoy a near monopoly is not a malicious Machiavellian plan to attain cultural supremacy, but mainly because the right has been content to leave the theme entirely to the left, either by benign neglect or because it felt that environmental issues were running counter to more important theme such as the economy (it is sometimes the case, but that's not an argument for abandoning the issue altogether – take immigration as an example).

It is therefore high time for conservatives to at least partially reclaim the environment, and it has a historic opportunity to do so today, as the economic consequences of the US and EU green deal have become all too obvious for everyone to see – indeed, this may well be a “1992 sterling crisis moment” for the environment, one where moral and political leadership on an issue can literally switch sides – that is, if political leaders decide to go for it.

Getting back to green, however, requires political will – and creativity. There are two problems that a conservative political leader faces when it comes to the environment: first, let's be honest, the right is divided on the issue. True, most people inside the right do believe that taking care of the environment is a priority, as long as it is done in a way that corresponds to their values. But some of us do believe that ecology is a waste of time, and even sometimes that climate

change is not real. This is an obvious problem when it comes to preserve the environment, and the right has to deal with it.

The second issue is actually a consequence of the first: because the right is divided, it is also not so keen on making actual proposals for the environment – in other words, while we know what the right is *against* when it comes to saving the planet, we still don't know what it is *for*, because it hasn't yet proposed clearly its own solutions. Some will describe it as intellectual laziness, but in honesty, it is primarily a fear that any bold proposal will divide the movement – which is obviously not something that any politician wants these days.

VALUES FIRST

So, how does one get out of this conundrum? Part of the equation, as I already mentioned, rests in leadership. But another part is policy and ideas – by bringing new ideas (or, as good ecologists, by recycling others) and starting from a philosophy that corresponds to the values of the right, bold politicians can redefine both the issue and the playing field. All it takes is a bit of leadership and creativity.

Not too much creativity though... We are lucky in the sense that, when it comes to green philosophy and conservative values, we do not have to re-invent the wheel, for this road has already explored by the greats of conservative thinking – and of course, when it comes to modern conservatism, the great Roger Scruton immediately comes to mind. His book, *Green Philosophy*, was my intro read when I started as political director at Shared Ground, and it remains a reference to me as I move forward with our programming and try to help people develop their own green agenda for the modern right.

But when it comes to values and approach, what does it mean to be a green conservative? Here are five terms that I believe must guide the work of anyone on the right wishing to develop an agenda a conservative political agenda for the environment.

The first point, of course, is that a *conservative* ecology should be *conservatory*, as opposed to revolutionary. The purpose of conservatism is to know what to keep (though not necessarily to keep everything as is), and this should be reflected in the policies that conservatives develop for the environment. The idea is to conserve, protect, rather than develop all-encompassing, revolutionary devices that aim as much (if not more) at changing society as saving the planet. Conservatism leaves this social engineering to the left, and focuses on conserving nature, biodiversity, and the beauty of our world.



Secondly, conservative ecology is, almost by definition, human-centered. This of course reflects Christian thought, but it is an all-encompassing value on the right. And while this might look self-evident to some, the reality is that some of the left-environmentalist agenda puts the humans after many other priorities – including after the planet. Conservatives put the human first, because they are aware that in reality, the planet can take care of itself (and indeed if one is to follow some of the most controversial left-environmentalist ideology, it would probably be better off without many of us – perhaps even better off without any of us). If we are curating our beautiful landscapes, if we are protecting the beauty and the diversity of fauna and flora that God gave us, if we are trying to curb carbon emissions, we are doing it for ourselves first – for our own survival as the human race, but also for our personal enjoyment. This means that any policy proposed by conservatives needs to be made first with consequences on human beings in mind.



Third (and this is extremely important), an ecology of the right should be rooted in space, not time: while much of the left-green agenda has become rooted in the latter (creating endless bureaucratic processes to save us from an impending doom – and sometimes destroying our wellbeing in the process), conservatives are rooted in their *terroir*, their territory. This does not mean that green conservatives do not want to save the planet (trust me, they do), but they think that this effort starts at home, not in a faraway land on which we have little control, and sometimes only partial knowledge (including in terms of how the ecosystem really functions, and the role of humans in it). In the late 1950s, to accompany (and justify at home) the process of decolonization, a French journalist exclaimed “La Corrèze avant la Zambèze!”, i.e., let's develop our own country rather than try to tell others how they should live. In many ways, the motto of a modern conservative in, say, Wales, could as well be “Snowdonia before Amazonia”. That does not mean that green conservatives cannot think globally, nor should they ignore the major environmental issues of the day in these faraway lands, but they should focus first on their own communities, and when dealing with global problems try to instore a constructive dialogue with those individuals in their local communities who curate their own environment. This is why conservatives

prefer the word “ecology” to “environment” or “environmentalism” – while the latter refers to the outside, a space neither defined nor finite, the former etymologically refers to the study (and discourse) of “home”, the one that we are in charge of curating while we are here – not only for ourselves, but to preserve the heritage given by our forefathers and to leave it to our descendants.

Fourth, and this is a consequence of the last point, green conservatives have more trust in actual people and communities (the “Little Platoons” of Edmund Burke fame) than large machineries that dehumanize processes and policies, may those be large bureaucracies or big corporations. The idea is to put people first, and in particular the people in the communities that are the curators of our common home. Those have often been left behind in the ecological conversation, and completely ignored by the way environmentalism has led its transitions in the past. As it happens, and perhaps because they have been left outside the discussion on the environment, these people are also voters – and more often than not, they vote on the right... Another reason to take care of these people and give them the responsibilities they crave for, rather than dehumanize them in endless bureaucratic processes. More generally, this also means that conservative ecology wishes to empower people in the private sector to help preserve our environment. That can mean, for example, encouraging more private money into green finance – as opposed to relying solely on taxpayers’ money for the transition to carbon-zero.

Finally, and probably as a consequence of all the last points, the green conservative needs to be pragmatic rather than ideological. This should be almost in the veins of conservatism, which itself is not a system of thought, but rather an attitude, a behavior towards the outside world: because conservatives fundamentally distrust social engineering and grandiose societal schemes, green conservatives should focus on their objectives rather than the processes, and leave whenever possible the choice to the local communities on how to reach that objective – as long as it is reached: in other words, trust but verify. Conservatives know that in politics, tough choices are always between the bad and the worst – and government usually chooses the worst. So, when they set

up a policy, they should leave as much as possible the initiative to local communities to organize themselves within the general framework they set up. To take a much more concrete example, if we are serious about transitioning to net-zero carbon by 2050, we should not close the door to any technology that may help us achieve it, may that technology be geo-engineering, biofuels, nuclear or solar/windmills (or a mix of all these). It is not up to a bureaucracy far away from the realities on the ground to decide these things, and technological neutrality must be the order of the day for conservatives when dealing with specific issues such as carbon emissions, mobility or the circular economy.

FROM VALUES TO POLICY

Now that these fundamental values have been laid out, the next challenge is to translate these principles into real, concrete conservative policies that can address the environmental issues that voters care about. At Shared Ground, we have worked with a group of 20 Italian conservative experts and professionals of the environmental question to do exactly that, in the context of the Bel Paese’s specific needs and issues. The result is a “manifesto for a green conservatism” that at the time of publishing this review (June 2026) has just been published, and presented to the press in Rome. It is an important document, precisely because it has been developed by conservative experts (all of them adhere to the political philosophy of the right, and claim at least a moral affiliation with one of the parties of the current coalition in power), and also because it is a 100% “Made in Italy” document: the role of Shared Ground in this endeavor has only been one of facilitation – and no ready-made solution has been imposed upon there. What we have done was simply to provide a healthy environment for people who so far had been feeling lonely in their defense of an ecological philosophy for the right to develop their own ideas and put them on paper.

The manifesto thus summarizes nine months of debates, research and discussions, with solutions ranging from the incentivization for private capital to finance directly the transition, to specific tariffs applied to fast-fashion outlets (which use cheap but artificial and carbon-loaded plastic fabrics to make clothes that are worn only a couple of times before being thrown away), to the inclusion of nuclear in Italy’s energy mix – a move that would need to be made in conjunction with a better grid connection to energy sources in Africa, so as to make Italy an energy hub for Europe. Not all the measures proposed in this manifesto are popular – we have tested some of them

in focus groups, and the reactions of ordinary voters to these proposals reflect a remarkable maturity that politicians, right and left, should take note of – for example, when it comes to fast-fashion tariffs, people are very much aware that the costs of such a measure would be principally borne by them, which they are not so keen on. In the end, voters are very well aware that there is no such thing as a free meal, and that any policy is a question of trade-offs – or rather, that there is always a price to pay for any political decision, especially when it comes to preserving our environment.

This is precisely why the policies presented in the manifesto should be seen first and foremost as a contribution to the debate, and certainly not as a one-size-fits-all solution to all ecological problems. Nor should they be seen as the only solution. The beauty of conservatism is that it allows, even encourages, internal debate as a way to get to the best resolution to a problem. There will always be a tension between the more liberal, laissez-faire wing of the conservative movement, which favors a minimum state intervention and maximum private initiative in solving common problems, and a more statist (some would say, continental) tradition defending a decisive state policy designed to compensate for the market’s failings. Thus, not every conservative will feel at ease with the proposal to impose tariffs on fast-fashion micro-packages, while efforts by the right and center-right to tackle overtourism (which often has disastrous consequences for the biosphere of affected areas) will be subject to ardent disagreement between conservatives over the extent to which private property rights should be limited (some would

even say trampled) in order to save a specific biosphere.

One should note that none of these debates are new, and the same conflict between the needs for extraction and preservation, between energy and beauty, has been at play when national parks were created. In the same way, these logics are currently creating much room for debate within the right, but these disagreements should not divert conservatives away from their fundamental values and their objective to preserve the beauty and livability of their own oikos, their own home and environment. Too much is at stake for the right to sink into division, and conservatives must therefore find ways to discuss the environment openly and develop policies, solutions and a narrative allowing them not only to pick up the good fight against the left, but also to propose a sensible and credible alternative to the ecological challenge.

IN SEARCH OF A COMMON SENSE APPROACH TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Nowhere is this dialogue more necessary than in the struggle to address climate change, a fundamentally divisive issue for the right, and at the same time a rallying cry for the left. To say that global warming (an exceptionally ideologically loaded term, much more so than climate change) has been a problem for the right is an understatement. Indeed, as Frederic C. Rich points out in his book *Getting to Green*, the start of the “great estrangement” between the conservative and environmentalist movements can be dated back to the 1990s and the emergence of climate change as a political issue. The (globalist) left claimed a monopoly on it, while conservatives hesitated from the outset between a skepticism that has too often slid into outright denialism, and a willingness to tackle the problem, though not necessarily on the right’s own terms. This has had a catastrophic impact on our cause: whenever conservative environmentalists have tried to discuss the issue and propose solutions, they have ultimately put themselves in a position of appearing to concede to the left or, to use the sports terminology I used at the beginning of this paper, they gave up the home turf advantage to the progressives. Meanwhile, climate deniers have made it much harder for the right to claim, let alone establish, credibility on tackling climate change.



Photo by Elena Savitskaia | Dreamstime.com

Of course, it would be easy to blame the climate deniers within our political family for the difficulties green conservatives have faced in advancing their agenda. But their position - when it is not driven by a direct interest in protecting fossil fuels - often began as a form of healthy skepticism. And, to be fair, that skepticism has sometimes been reinforced by irresponsible rhetoric on the left. Too many environmental activists have treated every unusually warm week, dry season, or extreme weather event as immediate proof of “global warming,” using each anomaly to push a political narrative. It is therefore unsurprising that their opponents responded by pointing to colder periods or contradictory weather patterns to challenge what they saw not simply as science, but as ideology wrapped in environmental messaging.

The skeptics therefore do have a point. What we know about the climate is that it is an immensely complex and constantly evolving system. Long before human beings appeared, the earth’s climate was already changing and, assuming humanity does not destroy itself first, it will continue to evolve long after us. Human activity undoubtedly plays a role in this process, particularly through industrial emissions and environmental degradation, but it is not the only factor shaping the planet’s climate. Solar activity, volcanic eruptions, oceanic cycles, and many other natural dynamics also influence atmospheric conditions, sometimes in ways we still do not fully understand.

Recognising this complexity should encourage prudence and humility. It is therefore legitimate to question overly simplistic narratives that present every climatic event as entirely man-made, or that imply emissions reductions alone can restore some supposedly fixed and “normal” climate equilibrium. The climate has never been static, and serious environmental policy must begin with that reality rather than with ideological certainty.

But even if it’s reasonable to apply a certain dose of skepticism to any claim of impending doom, denying that the problem exists, or that we can do anything about it, is equally an insult to common sense. As we learn more about climate history, it becomes clear that human activity has already impacted our climate in the past - even before the industrial era: carbon studies in glaciers (which offer a valuable record of past climates) show that the periods of most intense human activity, such as the peak prosperity of the Roman Empire in the second century AD, have coincided with more carbon-heavy atmosphere and associated changes in climate patterns - often harming the very polities involved in this intense rise of human activity. Closer to home, those of us old enough to remember past winters and summers can see for ourselves that our environment is warming: we now have generally warmer (or hotter) summers, and, in areas where

snow used to be a normal part of winter, it has now become something exceptional - almost an extreme event. Specific examples abound, from retreating glaciers in the Alps to the increasingly rarer occurrence of the Elfstedentocht in Friesland (the 11-city ice-skating endurance race which can take place only when the Northern Dutch canals freeze naturally). It has become difficult to deny a reality that we can see with our own eyes: there is such a thing as global warming, and even though we do not understand everything about it, we are pretty certain now that the human hand has played a role in it, and continues to do so. Applying a conservative principle - namely, that we should aim to preserve for our children what has been given to us by our forefathers - it therefore seems only logical for people on the right to seek to address this issue. That means taking a rational approach that acknowledges the costs and opportunities of any action, while making clear that the goal is not to change a society and to collectivize it, but to preserve the air we breathe, the

“The green conservative needs to be pragmatic rather than ideological.”

climate that we live in (to the extent that is possible), and the eco-system that surrounds us.

Of course, this doesn’t mean that conservatives should not apply a good dose of healthy skepticism to some of the claims made by the left in the pursuit of their own agenda, quite the contrary. But once we have accepted that tackling climate change is also a conservative endeavor, and perhaps one that can actually be better addressed by the right (after all, if one is to trust the conclusions of every report published by environmentalist organizations, the left has not been doing a very good job at it over the past thirty years), then we can start thinking about what a conservative approach to climate change might look like.

Having just said that, where do we start? First with values, and therefore by asking the right questions. As we’ve just seen, it is not a question of whether we should act, but how we should act. And the answer is that we must act in a way that is consistent with our

principles of prudence, responsibility, and respect for both human flourishing and inherited landscapes. If conservatism is about stewardship, then climate policy must be understood as an extension of that duty: not as an attempt to redesign the planet, but as an effort to care for what we have received and ensure its continuity.

A CONSERVATIVE ANSWER TO CLIMATE CHANGE

A sensible conservative climate policy should therefore prioritize resilience and adaptation alongside mitigation. Rather than investing all political capital into long-term emission targets enforced through rigid supranational frameworks, conservatives should invest in strengthening communities against the tangible effects of climate variability—flood defenses, water management systems, forest maintenance, coastal protections, and agricultural adaptation. These are concrete, place-based policies that protect people and property here and now, while also preparing societies for future uncertainties. They reflect a conservative skepticism toward abstract targets detached from lived realities, and a preference for visible, accountable action. In practice, this means decentralizing funding so that municipalities and regions can tailor their own climate resilience strategies, rather than applying uniform national blueprints that often fail to reflect local geography and needs - and, as thinkers like Roger Scruton have often lamented, blueprints that often bring inefficiency and, at times, even corruption.

Second, market mechanisms—properly designed—should be at the heart of emissions reduction. Conservatives need not reject pricing carbon; on the contrary, they can reclaim it from bureaucratic overreach by advocating simple, transparent systems that internalize environmental costs while avoiding the labyrinth of subsidies, exemptions and regulations too often attached to current policies. A carbon pricing mechanism that is revenue-neutral and that returns proceeds to citizens or reduces other taxes, aligns ecological responsibility with economic freedom. It ensures that innovation is driven by incentives rather than mandates, and that entrepreneurs—not bureaucrats—lead the transition. At the same time, conservatives should be vigilant about carbon leakage and unfair competition, and ensure that domestic industries are not undermined by imports from jurisdictions with lower environmental standards. Border adjustment mechanisms (or, to take a more Trumpian terminology, green tariffs), if designed carefully and sparingly, can help maintain a level playing field without descending into protectionism.

Third, technological neutrality must be a cornerstone of any credible conservative strategy. If the

objective is to reduce emissions, then excluding entire categories of solutions for ideological reasons is self-defeating. Nuclear energy, carbon capture, the diversification of energy sources (including nuclear), next-generation biofuels, hydrogen, and even emerging geo-engineering techniques should all be part of the conversation. Conservatives should resist the temptation to “pick winners” and instead create the conditions in which multiple solutions can compete and evolve - it was a major failure of the left to exclude nuclear energy (and in particular its modernized version, based on smaller reactors) and they are paying it dearly today, the right should not repeat the same mistake.

Technological neutrality should go hand in hand with honestly acknowledging the inevitable trade-offs that come as a result of energy choices. This in turn means that conservatives need to be transparent about the sources of energy on which our economies desperately depend. There is no magic solution to satisfy our energy needs, and every decision to make one source predominant in our energy mix comes with a price to pay: true, nuclear power is much safer now, but it still carries risks, if only in terms of the pollution associated with the extraction of uranium (and which is often overlooked because this extraction is done in countries far away from home - which is also a problem when we speak about securing energy independence, as very often the material used in our power plants, including rare earths and uranium, are not mined at home). Likewise, solar and wind are clean sources of energy, but they are clearly not sufficient for our growing economies, and they also carry costs in terms of space management, particularly in rural areas (where large solar and wind farms often end up being developed). Would an urban citizen like to be living next to a gigantic solar farm, surrounded by barbed wire? This is, however, what is (too) often being asked of our rural compatriots when “clean” energy plants are being developed in their communities. Accepting the reality that there is no such thing as a free meal (itself a source of energy for our bodies) is the first step toward a responsible vision of our energy production.

But living in the present is not enough, we also need to consider the future of our energy production, and that means encouraging R&D: investing in basic research, streamlining regulatory approval for new technologies, and fostering public-private partnerships that can bring innovations to scale. In this way, the costs associated with energy production will become more manageable - even though the risks attached to any choice will always remain, they can be mitigated by technological progress - at least to an extent. Importantly, this approach not only accelerates progress but also reduces strategic dependencies—something particularly relevant in an era where

energy security and geopolitical stability are increasingly intertwined.

Fourth, conservatives should emphasize local stewardship and property-based conservation. When individuals and communities have a stake in their environment—through ownership, long-term leases, or clearly defined usage rights—they are far more likely to manage resources sustainably. Policies that empower farmers, foresters, hunters and local authorities to act as custodians of their land can achieve far more than distant regulatory bodies. These could include incentives for soil carbon sequestration, support for regenerative agriculture, and the development of local energy cooperatives. In each case, the principle is the same: responsibility follows ownership, and stewardship follows responsibility. Importantly, this approach also restores dignity to professions and communities that have too often been portrayed as part of the problem, rather than as essential partners in the solution.

Fifth, conservatives should place a renewed emphasis on conservation in its own right—not only in terms of emissions,

but in protecting biodiversity, landscapes, and natural heritage. Climate policy should not become so carbon-centric that it overlooks the broader ecological fabric. Reforestation, wetland restoration, and the protection of marine ecosystems are all areas where conservative principles of preservation and continuity can be directly applied. These initiatives often deliver multiple benefits: they capture carbon, enhance resilience to extreme weather, and maintain the beauty and identity of local environments. Crucially, they also tend to enjoy broad public support, helping to bridge political divides.

Sixth, global warming must be addressed through cooperation rather than coercion. Conservatives are rightly wary of grand global governance schemes that dilute accountability and impose one-size-fits-all solutions. Instead, they can advocate for pragmatic international partnerships focused on

technology transfer, infrastructure investment, and mutually beneficial trade. Helping developing countries access cleaner energy sources, for example, is both an environmental and a geopolitical imperative. It reduces global emissions while

Conservatives know that in politics, tough choices are always between the bad and the worst – and government usually chooses the worst.



Photo by Nathan Dumiao on Unsplash

“Responsibility follows ownership, and stewardship follows responsibility.”

fostering stability and economic growth—objectives that align squarely with conservative priorities. Such cooperation should be grounded in reciprocity and respect for national sovereignty, avoiding the paternalistic tendencies that have sometimes characterized international climate diplomacy.

Seventh, a conservative agenda should also confront consumption patterns, but in a way that avoids moralizing or coercion. Rather than attempting to regulate individual behavior through bans and restrictions, policymakers can encourage more sustainable choices by improving information, aligning price signals, and supporting durable, high-quality production. Tackling waste—particularly in sectors such as fast fashion or electronics—can be achieved through standards that promote longevity, repairability, and recycling, without dictating lifestyles. The same logic can also be extended to food. Conservatives can draw attention to seasonal produce, support for small farmers, higher standards of animal welfare and the value of fresh food over highly processed, heavily packaged alternatives that produce a lot of waste. The aim should be to encourage a culture of moderation, quality and respect for the land and those who cultivate it. This aligns with a traditional conservative skepticism toward disposability and excess, favoring instead thrift, durability, localism and respect for material goods.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, conservatives must build their own story, their own narrative – not only for the environment, but on this particular issue. Climate policy should not be presented as a story of sacrifice and decline, but as one of renewal and continuity. It is about cleaner air in our cities, more resilient rural economies, and the preservation of landscapes that define national identities. It is about passing on not only a habitable planet, but a recognizable one—where the bonds between people, place, and tradition remain intact. This is not a utopian project, but a deeply conservative one: to conserve what is good, to repair what is damaged, and to approach the future with humility rather than hubris.

Of course, after reading this article and looking at Shared Ground’s website, people (especially from the left) might ask why we our think tank is empowering people to do on our side what others have spent years, even decades developing on theirs? After all,

even though the departing point and the process may be different, if the conclusions are the same, then the process would be redundant, and if the propositions are different, even antagonistic to those advocated by the Green left, then there is a legitimate ground to question how this de-polarizes the environmental question.

I have two answers to this legitimate critique. First, if despite differences in approach, environmentalists on right and left end up agreeing on some policy points (may be for example, on allowing free, untaxed private funding as a way to top-up state expenditure for the transition?), then we must be doing our job correctly, because that means that some form of consensus is forming on the environment – at least in some issues, and this is exactly what we’re here to do.

But even if the measures defended by the right are contrary to those of the left, one should not necessarily see this as a negative – or even as yet again a polarizing contribution to a public debate that has all too much of it already. That would be short-sighted. Democracy can only function if there is a debate, and therefore some questioning, that is accepted by everybody. And if, to paraphrase Descartes, common sense is the most shared feature among human beings, that also means that people (even – actually, especially – well-meaning ones) can also get it wrong. This is the way we are done as individuals, we have prejudices and biases, and our value system sometimes impedes us from seeing the obvious – which is why we need a contrarian view to challenge us and take the better of us. The near monopoly that the left has enjoyed over the environment may have helped it win a few elections, but in the long-term, it has been good neither for the left, the right or the environment. This needs to change – and this is what makes Shared Ground’s mission so interesting. ▀



Thibault Muzergues

Research Associate at the Wilfred Martens Center for European Studies in Brussels and essayist, Political Director for “Shared Ground”



Photo by Creative Stock Studio | Shutterstock.com



THE ETHICS OF LIMITS

Ecological integration as
a conservative response to
progressive environmentalism

Gian Piero Joime

The idolatry of growth A PROGRESSIVE PATHOLOGY

There is a dogma at the heart of modern economic civilization that has survived every crisis, every contradiction, and every catastrophe. It is the dogma of unlimited growth—the idea that economic expansion is not merely desirable but necessary, not merely a means but an end, not merely a measure of prosperity but the organizing principle of political life itself. It is, in the most precise sense of the term, an idolatry: the worship of a human construct as though it were a natural law.

Conservatives have always understood that idolatry destroys that which it venerates, and that an ethics of limits is not a modern invention but one of the oldest foundations of Western civilization. From the classical tradition of moderation and *prudentia*, through the Christian understanding of human finitude and stewardship of creation, to Burke's intergenerational covenant and Scruton's *oikophilia*, the recognition that freedom requires boundaries, and that order precedes freedom, runs as a continuous thread through the conservative inheritance. Ecology did not invent limits. It was the rationalist revolution

of the seventeenth century that forgot them, dissolving inherited bonds in the acid of abstract reason and replacing the ancient wisdom of living within nature with the boundless project of human mastery over it. The dogma of unlimited growth is the secular heir to this forgetting: it promises salvation through accumulation, progress through expansion, freedom through the limitless multiplication of wants and their satisfaction. And like all false religions, it demands sacrifices: of communities, landscapes, traditions, and of the natural world upon which human life itself depends.

Idolatry destroys that which it venerates, and... an ethics of limits is not a modern invention but one of the oldest foundations of Western civilization.

Almost the entirety of contemporary ecological discourse unfolds within a progressive framework. The Right has too often retreated into denial or laissez-faire complacency, while the Left has appropriated the environmental crisis as its own political terrain, presenting technocratic planning as the sole credible response. This essay challenges both positions—not from the centre, but from a deeper and more coherent conservatism. Its claim is not merely that conservatives ought to concern themselves with the environment; it is that conservatism alone possesses the intellectual resources necessary to apprehend the ecological crisis in its proper dimensions and to formulate an adequate response.

The European Green Deal is the most consequential expression of this progressive framework, and it is the clearest demonstration of its limitations. This is not because it is too ambitious, but because it is philosophically flawed. At its root lies what we may call the “transition paradigm”: the view that the environment is an external variable to be regulated *ex post*, and environmental damage an accounting constraint to be managed through regulatory coercion. An economy built upon this premise treats land, energy, and nature as mere inputs to be optimized, rather than as the material foundations of human and communal life, thereby consuming the very roots from which it springs. Growth that devours its own roots is not progress. It is a slow suicide, masquerading as prosperity.

The conservative response to the ecological crisis is older than the crisis itself. It begins with the Burkean intergenerational covenant—the recognition that each generation holds the natural and institutional order in trust, not in ownership. It continues through Scruton’s *oikophilia*—the understanding that environmental responsibility springs from the love of particular places, not from compliance with universal mandates. It finds its institutional architecture in the ordoliberal tradition—Eucken, Röpke, and the Freiburg School—which insisted that market freedom requires constitutive rules, not merely corrective interventions: *Ordnungspolitik*, not *Prozesspolitik*.

The conservative tradition finds unexpected confirmation in thinkers who arrived at convergent conclusions via different paths. Polanyi demonstrated that land, energy, and nature cannot be treated as ordinary market commodities without generating social and institutional dissolution. Georgescu-Roegen and Daly proved that economic growth operates within biophysical limits that no regulatory package can circumvent. These are not conservative arguments, yet they reinforce from the outside what the conservative tradition has always understood from within: that the economy is embedded in a natural and social order that it did not create and cannot indefinitely consume.

What unites these traditions is a conviction that the progressive environmental movement has systematically ignored: ecological limits are not external constraints to be managed *ex post*. They are constitutive principles of any enduring economic order—as foundational as the rules of competition, monetary stability, or the rule of law. From these convergent traditions emerges the need for a paradigm distinct from that of transition: not the external correction of environmental damage, but its structural incorporation into the economic order. This is what we call *ecological integration*—the attempt to build this incorporation into the very architecture of the economic order, not as a constraint imposed from without, but

as a constitutive principle from within. This is precisely what the Green Deal, for all its ambition, has failed to honour.

Ecological integration is not environmentalism dressed in conservative clothes. It is conservatism returning to one of its deepest insights: that unfettered freedom destroys its own conditions of possibility, and that the measure of a civilization is not what it produces, but what it preserves.

FROM TRANSITION TO ECOLOGICAL INTEGRATION

The European Green Deal has been the most ambitious progressive experiment in ecological governance in history. And it has demonstrated precisely what conservatives already knew: harmony with nature cannot be achieved by decree.

Launched in 2019, the European Green Deal committed the European Union to achieving climate neutrality by 2050 through an elaborate architecture of regulatory instruments: the ETS system, the CBAM mechanism, the Fit for 55 package, the sustainable finance taxonomy, the Farm to Fork strategy, the ban on internal combustion engines, and binding energy-efficiency standards for buildings. Thousands of pages of regulations, targets, and timetables—all grounded in a single organizing premise: that reconciliation between economic development and ecological limits can be achieved only through the regulatory correction of market failures, combined with the technological substitution of fossil-fuel-based systems with cleaner alternatives.

The results of this experiment are instructive—not because the Green Deal failed to produce results, but because the results it produced revealed, with unusual clarity, the structural limitations of the paradigm upon which it was founded.

The Green Deal reduced European emissions. It accelerated the deployment of renewable energy. It established a carbon-pricing regime that altered investment decisions across the industrial economy. These are genuine achievements. Yet they were purchased at a cost that the paradigm of transition was unable to perceive precisely because of its philosophical premises. A framework built upon corrective intervention—upon repairing environmental damage *ex post*—cannot, by its very nature, generate the harmonious alignment between ecological and industrial development that ecological integration would have sought from the outset. This was not bad luck. Nor was it a failure of implementation. It was the logical consequence of an inadequate philosophical framework. Three systemic and perverse effects followed, effects that its architects neither anticipated nor possessed the conceptual resources to address.

The first was technological dependency. The Green Deal generated massive European demand for clean technologies—solar panels, wind turbines, batteries, electric vehicles—without creating the productive capacity necessary to supply that demand from within Europe itself. The result was a form of green colonialism: Europe set the environmental standards; Asia supplied the technologies required to follow them. Sustainable in European accounting terms; disastrous in European industrial and geopolitical terms. As Europe became the Kingdom of Regulation, global competition consolidated the Empire of Technique.

The second was distributive regressivity. The costs of transition fell unevenly across society. Lower-income households, which devote a larger share of their budgets to energy and transportation, bore a disproportionate burden of the price increases associated with carbon taxation. Workers in hard-to-abate sectors—steel, chemicals, cement, ceramics, glass—faced growing threats to their livelihoods without commensurate support. A policy designed to protect future generations risked doing so at the expense of the most vulnerable members of the present one.

The third was selective deindustrialization. The regulatory burden imposed by the Green Deal increasingly placed European firms—particularly medium-sized enterprises in traditional industrial sectors—at a competitive disadvantage relative to non-European competitors operating under less stringent constraints. In some sectors, production simply relocated beyond Europe’s borders. Emissions did not disappear. They merely migrated beyond the boundaries of European accounting. A transition that exports emissions is not an ecological transition. It is creative accounting applied to the atmosphere. Europe reduced emissions on paper. Asia increased them in reality. The atmosphere does not read European accounting standards.

There is a profound irony at the heart of the ecological transition model—one that the architects of the Green Deal appear never to have confronted. The theory of sustainable development, rooted in the Brundtland Report, rests upon three pillars of equal importance: environmental, economic, and social. The Green Deal systematically privileged the first at the expense of the latter two. This is not merely a policy error. It is a theoretical heterodoxy—a departure from the very intellectual framework that progressive politics claimed to implement.

Moreover, the original theory is explicit in its understanding that the concept of the “environment” encompasses the human world itself: the built landscape, productive assets, and the industrial culture of territories. Within this logic, the destruction of an industrial district is no less an environmental catastrophe than deforestation. The loss of a thousand skilled jobs in a ceramic-producing valley constitutes a form

of unsustainability—of community, knowledge, and place—as real and irreversible as the loss of a thousand hectares of forest.

The Green Deal did not protect the environment in any theoretically coherent sense. It protected one environmental dimension while often compromising the economic and social dimensions.

Sustainable development theory, at its best, already describes what ecological integration ought to be: the harmonious interdependence of environmental, economic, and social dimensions as aspects of a single system rather than objectives to be balanced against one another. What has always been lacking is the institutional architecture capable of rendering this vision real—the constitutional moment that transforms a shared aspiration into a binding order. The Green Deal claimed to implement sustainable development. In practice, it dismembered it.

“Growth that devours its own roots is not progress. It is a slow suicide, masquerading as prosperity.”

These failures share a common root. A conservative analysis reveals something that a progressive analysis cannot easily perceive: the problem is not implementation. It is philosophy.

The Green Deal is founded upon the paradigm of transition: the belief that the relationship between economy and nature can be repaired through external correction—regulatory instruments, technological substitution, compensatory mechanisms—without transforming the philosophical foundations of the economic order itself. The transition paradigm presupposes a separation between economy and nature which it subsequently attempts to bridge through policy. It treats ecological limits as constraints to be managed rather than as constitutive principles of economic life. In philosophical terms, it remains Cartesian: a rational subject acting upon an external object, correcting from without a relationship that has gone awry.

The paradigm of ecological integration proposes something fundamentally different.

Ecological integration is the harmonious, simultaneous, and enduring interaction of economic, environmental, and social factors: a unified order in which none of these dimensions may be sacrificed to the others. Its fundamental premise is that the economy is structurally embedded within the natural order and the productive traditions of particular places. It is not a separate sphere that interacts with nature and local identities from the outside, but a complex system operating within the biophysical and cultural conditions that make its existence—and its durability—possible.

FROM TRANSITION TO ECOLOGICAL INTEGRATION

The European Green Deal was the most ambitious progressive experiment in ecological governance in history. And it demonstrated what conservatives already knew: harmony with nature cannot be achieved by decree.

Launched in 2019, the European Green Deal committed the European Union to climate neutrality by 2050 through a complex architecture of regulatory instruments: the ETS system, the CBAM mechanism, the 'Fit for 55' package, the sustainable finance taxonomy, the Farm to Fork strategy, the ban on internal combustion engines, and binding energy efficiency standards for buildings. Thousands of pages of regulations, targets and timetables – all based on a single organisational premise: that the reconciliation of economic development and ecological limits can only be achieved through regulatory correction of market failures, combined with the technological replacement of fossil-fuel-based systems with clean alternatives.

The results of this experiment are instructive – not because the Green Deal failed to produce results, but because the results it did produce revealed, with unusual clarity, the structural limitations of the paradigm on which it was founded.

The Green Deal has reduced European emissions. It has accelerated the development of renewable energy. It has introduced a carbon price that has altered investment decisions across the entire industrial economy. These are real results. But they have come at a cost that the transition paradigm could not foresee, precisely because of its philosophical foundations. A paradigm built on corrective intervention – on repairing

environmental damage after the event – cannot, by its very nature, bring about the harmonious alignment between ecological and industrial objectives that ecological integration would have pursued from the outset. Not bad luck. Not poor execution. The logical consequence of the wrong framework. This led to three systemic perverse effects that its architects had not foreseen and that their paradigm could not manage.

The first was technological dependence. The Green Deal created massive European demand for clean technologies – solar panels, wind turbines, batteries, electric vehicles – without building the production capacity to meet that demand from within Europe. The result was a form of green colonialism: Europe set the environmental standards; Asia supplied the technologies to meet them. Sustainable on paper in European accounting terms. Catastrophic in terms of European industry and geopolitics. Whilst Europe became the Kingdom of Standards, global competition established the Empire of Technology.

The second issue was distributional regressivity. The costs of the transition have been borne unequally. Low-income households, which spend a larger proportion of their household budget on energy and transport, have borne a disproportionate share of the price increases resulting from carbon taxation. Workers in 'hard-to-abate' sectors – steel, chemicals, cement, ceramics and glass – saw their

jobs threatened without adequate support. A policy designed to protect future generations risked doing so at the expense of the most vulnerable members of society today.

The third issue was selective deindustrialisation. The regulatory burden of the Green Deal has placed European businesses – particularly medium-sized firms in traditional industrial sectors – at an increasing competitive disadvantage compared with non-European competitors not subject to equivalent constraints. In some sectors, production has been relocated outside Europe. Emissions have not disappeared. They have simply shifted outside the European accounting perimeter. A transition that exports emissions is not an ecological transition. It is creative accounting applied to the atmosphere. Europe has reduced its emissions on paper. Asia has increased them in reality. The atmosphere does not recognise European accounting standards.

There is a profound irony in the model of the ecological transition, which the architects of the Green

Deal seem never to have addressed. The theory of sustainable development, rooted in the Brundtland Report, rests on three pillars of equal weight: environmental, economic and social. The Green Deal has systematically prioritised the first at the expense of the other two. This is not merely a policy error. It is a theoretical heterodoxy, a betrayal of the very intellectual framework that the progressive left claimed to be implementing. Moreover, the original theory explicitly holds that the concept of 'environment' encompasses human endeavour: the built landscape, productive heritage and the industrial culture of local areas. According to this logic, the destruction of an industrial district is no less of an environmental catastrophe than deforestation. The loss of a thousand skilled jobs in a ceramics-producing valley is a form of unsustainability – of community, of knowledge, of place – that is just as real and irreversible as the loss of a thousand hectares of forest. The Green Deal has not protected

the environment in any theoretically coherent sense. It has protected the environmental dimension, often at the expense of the economic and social dimensions.

The theory of sustainable development, at its best, already describes what ecological integration should be: the harmonious interdependence of the environment and

environmental, economic and social dimensions as parts of a single system, not as objectives to be pitted against one another. What has always been lacking is the institutional framework to make this a reality, the constitutional moment that transforms a shared aspiration into a binding order. The Green Deal claimed to implement sustainable development. In practice, it has dismantled it.

These failures share a common root. A conservative analysis reveals something that a progressive analysis cannot see: the problem is not the implementation. It is the philosophy. The Green Deal is founded on the transition paradigm: the idea that the relationship between the economy and nature can be repaired through external corrections – regulatory instruments, technological substitution, compensatory mechanisms – without transforming the philosophical foundations of the economic order itself. The transition paradigm presupposes a separation between the economy and nature, which it then attempts to bridge through policy. It treats ecological limits as constraints to be managed, not as constitutive principles of economic life. It is, in philosophical terms, still Cartesian: a rational subject acting upon an external object, correcting from the outside a relationship that has gone awry.

The paradigm of ecological integration proposes something radically different. Ecological integration is the harmonious, simultaneous and enduring interaction of economic, environmental and social factors: a unified system in which no dimension can be sacrificed for the sake of the others. Its premise is that the economy is structurally integrated into the natural order and the productive traditions of local areas: not a separate sphere that interacts with nature and local identities from the outside, but a complex system that operates within the local biophysical and cultural conditions that make it possible and sustainable.

From this premise follow three operational consequences that distinguish integration from transition.



Photo by Dan Roizer on Unsplash

First, ecological limits are not external constraints to be managed *ex post*, but constitutive principles of economic order to be incorporated *ex ante*—just as the rules of competition, monetary stability, and the rule of law are embedded within the foundations of market economies. They define the architecture within which economic freedom operates, not the cage that restricts it.

Second, sustainability is not a final destination to be reached at the end of a transitional process. It is a permanent operational criterion—environmental, economic, and social—that must orient every industrial and political decision. This means that ecological and industrial objectives cannot be pursued sequentially—first decarbonization, then the reconstruction of competitiveness—but must be integrated from the outset within a coherent strategy. A Europe that achieves its climate targets by dismantling its industrial base has not solved the problem. It has merely exported it.

Third, the governance of ecological integration cannot be entrusted to centralized planning or to the proliferation of sector-specific regulations. It requires an architecture of general, predictable, and binding rules—following the ordoliberal model—that defines the limits within which market freedom, territorial autonomy, and the responsibility of economic actors may operate. Rules that accommodate rather than suppress the plurality of local solutions.

The Draghi Report (2024) and the Clean Industrial Deal (2025) represent a partial recognition of these failures. The language has changed: less transition, more competitiveness; fewer climate targets considered in isolation, more emphasis on industrial sovereignty. Decarbonization can no longer be pursued independently of industrial policy, energy security, and the competitive position of European firms within global markets.

This represents progress, but progress that remains partial and fragile. The Clean Industrial Deal adjusts the instruments of transition without transforming its philosophical foundations. It remains a corrective approach—one that acknowledges the competitive distortions generated by the Green Deal and seeks to remedy them. Yet it still does not incorporate ecological limits as constitutive principles of economic order. It places them alongside industrial policy rather than integrating them structurally within it. The underlying logic of a regulatory doctrine imposed from above remains unchanged.

A genuinely conservative approach to ecological governance must go further. It must construct a European economic order in which ecological limits function as foundational rules—as binding and as general as the rules of competition themselves—within which the diversity of national industrial strategies,

energy mixes, and territorial traditions can pursue their own paths of development.

Fewer rules, but more fundamental ones. Fewer regulations, but more binding principles. Less standardization, more constitutional order. Less micro-management from Brussels, greater national strategic autonomy within a shared ecological framework.

Properly understood, this is the only architecture of ecological governance consistent with conservative principles.

The Italian Approach INDUSTRIAL SOVEREIGNTY AND ECOLOGICAL INTEGRATION

Italy's position within the European debate on ecological governance is at once distinctive and instructive—and distinctive precisely because its underlying logic is profoundly conservative. It is distinctive because no other major European economy combines the same structural characteristics: a manufacturing base built upon territorial industrial districts rather than national champions; deep energy dependence; a central geopolitical position within the Mediterranean; and industrial sectors whose very nature resists rapid decarbonization. It is instructive because the Italian condition renders visible, in concentrated form, precisely what ecological integration ought to mean in practice: not a universal regulatory model imposed

“The atmosphere does not read European accounting standards.

from above, but a strategy rooted in the particular productive traditions, territorial identities, and strategic interests of a specific place. Italy is not merely a case study. It is the conservative argument made concrete.

Italy is a manufacturing power of a distinctive kind. Its industrial system is not organized around large national champions but around a constellation of local production districts, highly specialized medium-sized enterprises, and long, flexible supply chains spanning sectors that much of the developed world has largely abandoned: precision engineering, specialty chemicals, ceramics, glass, paper, specialty steels, and high-quality agri-food production. These are energy-intensive sectors, difficult to decarbonize

rapidly through electrification alone, highly exposed to energy costs, and deeply embedded in international competition.

This industrial structure carries direct implications for ecological policy. Any strategy of decarbonization that fails to account for the specific characteristics of Italy's hard-to-abate sectors risks producing deindustrialization rather than sustainability. The ceramics of Sassuolo, the engineering firms of Brescia, the glass-makers of Murano: these are not merely industrial sectors awaiting decarbonization. They are civilizations in productive form. The communities built around them—in the Po Valley, Tuscany, the North-East, and the Mezzogiorno (the South of Italy)—carry within them centuries of productive tradition, cultural identity, and social cohesion shaped by particular forms of labour. To destroy them in the name of net zero is not to save the planet. It is to impoverish Europe.

This is the deepest meaning of the conservative critique. By imposing universal technological standards from above, indifferent to territorial particularities and to the rhythms of local productive life, the Green Deal has too often sacrificed the human and social capital that constitutes the true foundation of sustainable development. It has sacrificed the concrete reality of communities, skills, and places upon the altar of climatic abstraction.

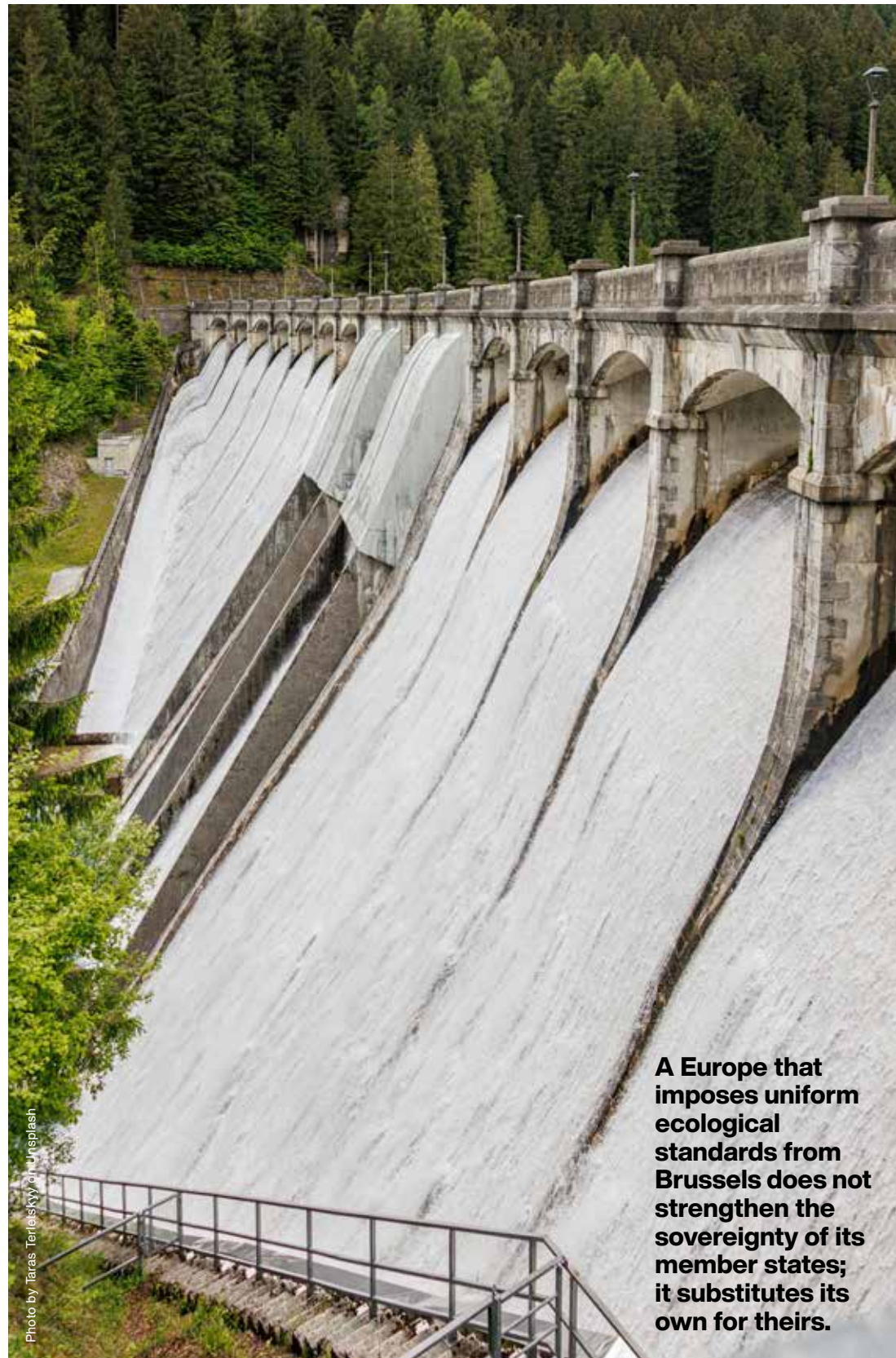
Italy's geographical position is equally distinctive. Italy is not, as Brussels sometimes appears to assume, the Southern periphery of a Northern European economic order. It is the centre of the Mediterranean: the hinge between Europe and Africa, between the Atlantic system and the Middle East, between the old industrial world and the emerging economies of the Global South. This position carries strategic implications for energy and ecological governance that no European regulatory framework has yet adequately recognized.

The Mediterranean is one of the principal theatres of twenty-first-century energy geopolitics. The natural gas reserves of the Eastern Mediterranean, the solar energy potential of North Africa, the future hydrogen corridors linking Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe—these are strategic assets whose development will significantly shape the energy sovereignty of the European continent. Italy, by virtue of its infrastructure, industrial capabilities, relationships across the Mediterranean basin, and geographical centrality, occupies a unique position. It can become not a passive terminal for decisions taken elsewhere, but an active hub of Euro-Mediterranean integration.

The Mattei Plan for Africa represents, in embryonic form, the correct approach to this role: not extractive dependence but co-development; not resource exploitation but shared infrastructure, technological transfer, and integrated supply chains linking the



Photo by Jason Weingardt on Unsplash



A Europe that imposes uniform ecological standards from Brussels does not strengthen the sovereignty of its member states; it substitutes its own for theirs.

Photo by Iaras Terlesky on Unsplash

Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean. It offers the outline of a sovereign ecology—one that honours the bond between people and land on both sides of the sea.

For Italy, the integration of territorial ecological limits into economic order is not an ideological choice. It is a strategic necessity. Energy security is not an alternative to environmental sustainability; it is its political precondition. Without abundant and reliable energy, Italy's manufacturing economy cannot remain competitive. Without a competitive manufacturing economy, there can be no social foundation for the investments, transitions, and long-term commitments that genuine ecological responsibility requires.

Technological neutrality is the operational expression of this principle. Italy's hard-to-abate industries—steel, chemicals, cement, ceramics—are not problems to be eliminated. They are the productive backbone of entire regional economies, carrying within them centuries of accumulated expertise, local identity, and industrial culture. They cannot be decarbonized through electrification alone within any realistic time horizon.

emerges not from administrative imposition, but from territorial rootedness. This is ecological integration in practice.

The question of nuclear energy belongs within this same line of reasoning. Italy's two nuclear referenda took place in a world that no longer exists—technologically, geopolitically, or industrially. The emergence of new generations of small modular reactors and the growing plausibility of nuclear fusion fundamentally reframes the debate. Nuclear energy is not an alternative to renewables; it is the stable, zero-carbon base-load that makes a predominantly renewable electricity system possible without sacrificing reliability.

For an industrial economy that requires abundant, predictable, and affordable electricity in order to decarbonize its most energy-intensive processes, excluding nuclear power on ideological grounds is not an environmental principle. It is an act of strategic self-harm. Italy is moving decisively in the right direction. The legislative delegation recently approved by the Italian Parliament, establishing the regulatory conditions for the return of civilian nuclear energy, is

“Sustainability appears not as a destination to be reached, but as a permanent criterion governing every decision.

Green hydrogen, biomethane, carbon capture and storage, low-emission industrial processes: these are different pathways toward the same destination, each suited to different conditions, temporal horizons, and investment logics. A system of governance that imposes a single technological solution is not ecological integration.

It is technocratic planning with a green veneer: the conservative's oldest adversary clothed in contemporary garments.

A single example is worth more than a thousand definitions. For more than a century, Alpine communities in Italy have managed their hydroelectric resources not because a European directive required them to do so, but because their relationship with water is constitutive of their economic and cultural identity. Here, the natural limit is not a bureaucratic constraint. It is the founding principle around which the entire local economy has been organized. Sustainability appears not as a destination to be reached, but as a permanent criterion governing every decision. Governance

completing its parliamentary course—a long-awaited step toward restoring nuclear competence as a strategic pillar of national energy sovereignty.

Europe's partial response to these failures—the Clean Industrial Deal—has shifted the language toward competitiveness and industrial sovereignty, implicitly recognizing that transition cannot be pursued at the expense of the productive base. Yet the tension at the heart of this new approach—between common binding objectives and the freedom of member States to define their own paths—is not a technical problem. It is a political question concerning the kind of Union, Europe wishes to become. No country renders this question more concrete—or more urgent—than Italy.

The conservative answer is clear: a Europe that establishes common principles and safeguards their coherence, while leaving strategic and operational responsibility for implementation to the member states. Subsidiarity, not as a rhetorical concession to national sensitivities, but as a genuine constitutional principle. The diversity of Europe's territories, traditions,

and industrial systems is not an obstacle to ecological governance. Properly understood, it is its richest resource—provided that governance is designed to cultivate such diversity rather than suppress it.

Ecological integration is not a federalist project. It does not ask member States to surrender sovereignty to a supranational ecological authority. It asks for something more demanding, and more genuinely conservative: that each nation exercise its sovereignty responsibly within a framework of shared principles that no state may unilaterally dissolve.

The distinction is fundamental. A Europe that imposes uniform ecological standards from Brussels does not strengthen the sovereignty of its member states; it substitutes its own for theirs. A Europe that defines common ecological principles while leaving nations responsible for discovering their own paths towards their realization does not weaken European ambition: it makes it credible, because it grounds it in the concrete diversity of the territories, traditions, and productive orders from which Europe is composed.

The practical architecture of such a framework remains an open question. How are shared principles translated into binding commitments without degenerating into uniform mandates? How are asymmetries to be managed when one nation's investment in nuclear power, renewable energy, or strategic infrastructure becomes a new dependency for another? These are not objections to ecological integration. They are the questions that any serious conservative intellectual project must now confront.

This essay does not claim to resolve them. It proposes the framework within which they must be posed, and invites the debate that only honest political thought can advance.

This is the European question that Italy makes impossible to avoid. The issue is not how to make the transition more efficient. It is whether the European Union is capable of constructing, at last, a genuine ecological order founded upon shared principles, national autonomy, and the recognition that sustainability cannot be standardized across the irreducible diversity of European civilizations.

Italy is not a special case. It is the European case in its most concentrated form. Every tension brought to light by the Green Deal—between decarbonization and deindustrialization, between regulatory uniformity and territorial diversity, between energy dependence and strategic sovereignty—is experienced by Italy with more intensity than another European economy. For this reason, the Italian path toward ecological integration is not a national idiosyncrasy. It is a prototype: a concrete demonstration that an

ecological order grounded in shared principles and national autonomy is not a theoretical abstraction, but an already practicable possibility.

Conclusion ECOLOGICAL ORDER AS CONSERVATIVE RENEWAL

The distinction between the paradigm of ecological transition and that of ecological integration is more than semantic. It marks the difference between a corrective approach that leaves intact the philosophical foundations of unlimited growth—even when growth is disguised as a green economy—and an integrative approach that incorporates territorial ecological limits into the very architecture of economic order itself.

The conservative tradition, properly understood, has always stood on the side of integration.

Burke's intergenerational covenant, Scruton's *oikophilia*, and the ordoliberal conception of the market as an institutional order are not isolated insights. They are convergent expressions of a single, profound intuition: that freedom without limits destroys the conditions that make freedom possible; that communities remain sustainable only when they live within the bounds of their natural and cultural inheritance; and that the measure of a civilization lies not merely in what it produces, but above all in what it preserves and transmits.

The idolatry of unlimited growth—including that version founded upon imported clean technologies and the externalization of climate ambition to Asian supply chains—is not conservative. It is revolutionary in Burke's deepest sense of the term. It severs the continuity between past, present, and future. It consumes the natural and cultural capital upon which communities depend. It substitutes the abstract logic of accumulation for the concrete wisdom of limits. A conservatism that defends this idolatry in the name of economic freedom has confused means with ends. In doing so, it has abandoned its most important insight in favour of its most superficial reflection.

The progressive solution—the regulatory engineering of the Green Deal, the technocratic imposition of universal standards, the centralized management of ecological transformation—is not an answer. It is the same disease in a different uniform. It corrects the symptoms of the dogma of unlimited growth without confronting its causes. It imposes from above what can be sustained only from below. It substitutes bureaucratic compliance for civic responsibility. And it produces, as the decade of the Green Deal has demonstrated, many of the same resistances and pathologies it was intended to overcome.

A civilization that understands this does not need to be made sustainable by decree.

The ecological question does not belong to the Left. It never did. The Left appropriated it and clothed it in the language of technocratic planning—and this is precisely why the Green Deal failed. The conservative tradition—from Burke to Kirk, from Eliot to Röpke, and ultimately to Scruton—possessed the answer long before the question acquired its present urgency. Ecological integration is not an accommodation to progressive pressure. It is conservatism returning to itself.

Limits are not the enemy of freedom. They are its condition. A river without banks is not water set free. It is a flood.

From this principle follows a different understanding of sustainability itself. Sustainability is not a metric to be optimized, but the capacity to preserve through time the defining characteristics of a community. It means not producing more at any cost, but producing better: honouring quality, attachment to place, and the rhythms of local productive life.

Growth that devours its own roots is not progress. It is suicide disguised as prosperity. Ecological integration is a conservative third way, though not in the tepid and centrist sense that phrase has sometimes acquired. It is not a compromise between a Right that denies limits and a Left that instrumentalizes them. It is a more radical alternative to both: a return to the deepest conservative insight that durable order requires constitutive rules, that freedom presupposes boundaries, and that the health of a civilization is measured not by the rate of its growth but by what it chooses to protect and transmit.

Against the laissez-faire of market liberalism, it insists upon limits. Against the technocratic planning of a left progressive politics, it insists upon freedom. It is not the middle ground. It is the higher ground.

What is required is not another regulatory package, but a constitutional moment of a different kind: one that incorporates ecological limits into the foundational architecture of the European economic order while simultaneously redistributing power downward. Brussels defines the principles—the ecological boundaries within which market freedom must operate. The member States

choose the paths. This is not a weakening of European ambition. It is its only realistic form: shared objectives, sovereign implementation, and the recognition that sustainability cannot be standardized across the irreducible diversity of European civilizations. The intellectual resources for such a constitutional redesign are not to be found in progressive planning, which has consistently confused the destination with the route. They are to be found in conservatism, which has always understood that a durable order requires general rules, local freedom, and the wisdom to distinguish between the two.

The eco-conservative path is an alliance between man, legal order, and the land. To recall Burke's immortal teaching, society is a covenant of historical continuity that transcends the caprice of the present. And as Scruton demonstrated, environmental stewardship flourishes only where *oikophilia*—a rooted love of place and of the memory of one's forebears—transforms limits from regulatory constraints into the very conditions of responsible freedom.

At its deepest level, the ecological crisis is a crisis of rejected limits. The conservative response is neither to reject those limits further nor to entrust them to technocratic management. It is to build the institutional order—national, European, and Mediterranean—within which limits cease to appear as constraints and become the very foundation of freedom itself. This is ecological integration: not a programme of reforms,

but a conception of order in which sustainability is not imposed from above but rooted within the institutions, territories, and communities that embody it. A civilization that understands this does not need to be made sustainable by decree. ▀



Photo by Victoria Wang on Unsplash



Gian Piero Joime

Essayist Professor of Environmental Economics,
and Board Member of Italian "ENEA"



LIVING IN “SCRUTOPIA” Another Way of Life

Sophie De Courcy - Scruton

The farmed landscape tells a history of how people have lived and worked in the countryside for generations. In England the countryside is very varied with places that are in close proximity looking entirely different. For instance, in Wiltshire, from where I write, the landscape varies so much that the maxim, ‘As different as chalk and cheese’ came into general use. The chalk referring to the downland landscape of the Marlborough and Salisbury Plains and the cheese referring to the heavy clay soil around Malmesbury that provides ample grazing pastures for dairy cows and thus a cheese-making industry. These two different landscapes are only 10 miles apart. The appearance of this land is not entirely a product of the geology and nature, but mostly the result of the work of farmers who bend nature to their agricultural needs. Thus one way to study a landscape is to get-to-know the people who are settled on the land.

I have now lived at Sundeley Hill Farm in North Wiltshire near the historic medieval town of Malmesbury for 30 years. Another local maxim is that ‘you are not a local until you have been here 30 years’,

so this year is quite a milestone. I moved here on marrying Roger Scruton in 1996. He had recently acquired Sundeley Hill Farm and was beginning an exciting new chapter in his life. A chapter, which makes up the main part of his short autobiographical book, *On Hunting* published in 1998. In this he wrote: “My life divides into three parts, in the first I was wretched; in the second ill at ease; in the third hunting.” It is the third part

that I shared with him and it is through the experience of hunting that we got to know our neighbors and learnt to farm the land. It was from horseback that Roger could make close observations of land use and his analysis was, as so often, ahead of his time. *On Hunting* begins with the story of him taking his friend, Jessica Douglas-Home’s pony, for a ride from

her house in the Cotswolds and in describing the landscape, he sets out his view that a landscape must be inhabited and taken care of by people who value their surroundings. He fears a countryside that is deserted which, he says, “will happen as soon as people cease to remake the countryside through the process of their own reproduction. If you love the hedgerows and pastures, the patchwork of fields, the copses and

A landscape must be inhabited and taken care of by people who value their surroundings... it will happen as soon as people cease to remake the countryside through the process of their own reproduction.

coverts which lie scattered among them, and the footpaths, bridleways and hunt jumps which allow passage through, then it is because you see in these things the imprint of human life. Ancestral patterns of ownership and labour speak to us from our landscape – patterns which have been wiped from the industrialised prairies of East Anglia, as they have been wiped away from the collective farms of Russia, Hungary and Bohemia." The passage continues to describe regretfully wastelands surrounding North American cities and then moves to observations about farming under the old Europe-wide Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that was the main influence on farming from the mid-1960s onwards. "Such thoughts often troubled me on my rural rides. And it was while meditating on the

changed. I was concerned that future subsidies would all go to farms that were converting from a monoculture to a more nature-friendly system, and that there would be nothing for those who had preserved the balance between nature and production all along.

My own integration into this farming community was secured after working as the master of the local hunt, where my job was to visit farmers on a weekly basis to prepare for a day when the hounds and followers might cross their land. This was perhaps one of the most privileged experiences of my life – being welcomed into people's homes to talk about their families and farms. Through this, I made many friends and gained a detailed knowledge of how they farm. I also started to see each farm as part of a wider whole, each

“It was from horseback that Roger could make close observations of land use...

Potemkin economy that is rotting our countryside that I discovered hunting. We were clopping down a narrow lane between grass verges, on one side a vast stretch of ugly 'set-aside', on the other a vaster field of winter barley. It was a raw November day, and the bleak brown furrows glimmered beneath scratchy aluminum clouds, the hedgeless ditches like the trenches of some recent battle-front. Even in the Cotswolds you encounter these Brussels-blighted regions, where boundaries, coverts and spinneys have been razed and pastures ploughed for the sake of subsidies. And while Dumbo plodded on, expecting his stable to loom into view with food and warmth and safety, I pondered the wasted land and felt my hopes of home again receding. Perhaps I should have kept to my old routines – encountering England only in literature and taking my rural rides with William Cobbett."

In recent years many more writers have written convincingly about the habitat loss and the ecological crisis of intensive or mono-culture farming and this knowledge is now widely shared. In Britain, following Brexit, a new subsidy system known as ELMS (Environmental Land Management) was introduced by the Conservative minister for Farming, Michael Gove, and is one of his highest achievements as a government minister. This system provides subsidies to farmers whose methods protect the environment. When his policies were being formed around 2019, I started to bring together farmers in our area in the hope that they would not lose out when policy

linked to the next by distinctive landscape features. It is, as I mentioned, land that is primarily used for grazing cattle and so over the years the farmers have protected features that are part of this farming system. Above all this means maintaining the hedgerows that divide the land into small grazing fields, which if you can look across the land from a viewpoint, makes it appear like a patchwork quilt. Within these hedgerows are often mature trees of oak, ash, maple and hazel. Many show the signs of human use down the ages, such as where they have been pollarded for wooden tool handles or wood fuel. The mature trees date back to the sixteenth century when the area was a royal hunting forest known as the Braydon Forest.

Once you know the modern landscape well enough, you can see a distinctive character to the area made up of pasture, hedgerows, trees, woodland and small ponds, all the things that with the right management create a landscape of open wood pasture that is renowned for supporting nature. The former Braydon Forest is now recognized as a special habitat where rare species of flowers, birds and butterflies can be found. This is thanks to the way in which the land has been farmed over generations. Therefore, at the moment when the subsidy system was being implemented, I was keen to make a record of the sensitive way in which farmers had managed this land over the years and already played their part in conserving biodiversity. Thanks to the intimate knowledge I had gained from visiting all the

farmers, I was able to write round to them with a survey to chronicle how they perceived their farm and how they wanted it to develop. The response was enthusiastic and showed that many of them farmed from the basis of deep knowledge about the natural environment and some scepticism about the former EU subsidy system that they had been working to over the last few decades. This survey findings then formed the basis of meetings I hosted at our farm to discuss areas of common interest and to share knowledge between neighbors. There was a competitiveness as well, not in terms of economic success, but in terms of the prevalence of natural features and ecology between individual farms. We formed a group called the Braydon Forest Farmers and received recognition from the Government's policy to support farm cluster groups through the Natural England Facilitation Fund. The group really flourished because it had been formed from the bottom up by mutual consent between neighbors.

The survey and meetings to establish the Braydon Forest Farmers group provides a useful record of the relationship between people and place.

When it became clear that the features that survive here are valued by wider society, farmers felt encouraged. The local conservation charity, the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, was able to begin to work with the farmers to see their land as a wider conservation project and to try to spread the plants that support rare species such as the marsh fritillary butterfly and the lapwing. Farmers volunteered to join survey work for birds and bats and to manage their hedgerows and grassland to provide a source of food.

In addition, the new post-Brexit subsidy system has been developed sympathetically to farmers. The Sustainable Farming Initiative (SFI) whereby grazing and hay-cropping is done in a way that still leaves room for nature and protects hedgerow corridors, works

alongside traditional practices that have always been followed here. Some farms have gone a stage further and entered 10-year schemes under the Higher Level Stewardship to convert land from intensive grazing to a system of open wood pasture that will connect important areas of woodland.

Another catalyst for local action to protect the countryside has been in response to a proposal for a 3000 acre solar panel installation, known as Lime Down, that would cover the land of a number of farms on the south and west of Malmesbury. Thousands of people have joined the campaign to 'Stop Lime Down' as they are appalled by the prospect of losing so much countryside to semi-industrial use. One family farm, that could be surrounded by the monumental solar panels (each 4 mtrs high) is a leading force in the Stop Lime Down campaign. This family farm is a modern dairy farm where all members of the family work in the business and look after their land for the purpose of producing milk. This purpose also creates 'the countryside' for all those people who live in the adjacent village.



The solar proposal is an unacceptable threat to people's sense of place and love of home. The campaign to 'Stop Lime Down' has made explicit the cohesion between family farms and others. It helps to justify a subsidy system which encourages farmers to protect the countryside, which has a place in the heart of many people and where landscape character and biodiversity are a public good. Although the dairy farmers in the middle of the solar application would have been approached to agree to let their land be included, they could not readily forgo their sense of duty to their farm and their way of life, which they want their children and grandchildren to be able to continue. The Lime Down debate also highlights how state-promoted 'green' energy initiatives, justified on the basis of improving the environment, come at a cost of destroying farmland and nature.

In Britain, farming television series are popular viewing and Clarkson's Farm has boosted the morale of farmers. Clarkson is loved by farmers as he has fully involved himself in his own farm and the people who work with him. Although he has come in from the outside, he has also been willing to join in and take up the responsibility of farming the land and face the same decisions and risks as his neighbors. The young farmer, Caleb, who works for Clarkson is typical of the young men that work on farms across the country. They are resourceful and sure of how to do things. Clarkson's Farm series conveys the camaraderie between farmers when they are all devoted to a big job such as fixing a tractor or bringing in the harvest. The series portrays the current tension between farming for maximum production or for environmental protection and Clarkson himself has shown the predicament that farmers face. However, his intense interest in all that happens on his farm, has brought out his instinct to conserve the natural assets and to influence farmers around him. He began by setting out to farm economically but, with time, he has taken on the responsibility of stewardship and enjoys its rewards.

“Ancestral patterns of ownership and labour speak to us from our landscape.



Photo by Kit Ko on Unsplash

For me, the inspiration to conserve the landscape, comes not just from observation and community engagement, but also to continue the interest shown by writers and artists who have recorded and responded to it. This year marks the 400th anniversary of the birth of John Aubrey, a 17th Century diarist and biographer, most famous for his work of short biographies called *Brief Lives*. These biographies give an intimate view of his subjects, appearance, character, qualities and flaws. The Wiltshire Museum of Chippenham is due to open an exhibition recording his childhood here outside Malmesbury and to put on show his manuscripts which form his unpublished *Natural History of Wiltshire*. Aubrey committed to paper a biographical account of the landscape and was one of the first to record the ancient Wiltshire stone circle monuments of Avebury and Stonehenge. Writers and artists put themselves in direct relation with their surroundings and convey to us both more detail than we might ourselves notice and provide context as to what we might find valuable. Both Turner and Constable painted Wiltshire scenes, and both captured the agricultural nature of the county elevated by its great churches. The early twentieth-century arts and crafts artists of the Cotswolds started to add detail of local plants and animals to their work and show an interest in rural crafts and skills that are the basis of countryside management.

Literature, poetry, art and even music offers another human lense through which to relate to a landscape and appreciate every detail.

One of the greatest gifts of the past 30 years living at Sunde Hill Farm is to have books written by Roger that chronicle the human ecology of this area and develop a conservative philosophy for environmental protection. While I and my neighbors may have good instincts about what is important, and a practical way of achieving it, Roger was able to capture in words what we value and why.

In the earlier extract from *On Hunting*, the image of a desolate landscape of agri-business is presented and Roger yearns for 'the imprint of human life', which he thinks might now only be available through literature. Yet in the move to Sunde Hill Farm, he discovers the imprint he is looking for and manages to capture it in words. His book about settling at Sunde Hill Farm is called *News from Somewhere* (2004) and creates a lovely account of our area and our neighbors: "North of the village of Brinkworth, bounded to the west by the ancient borough of Malmesbury, to the north by the Malmesbury-Cricklade road, and to the

east by Webb's Wood and Somerford Common... two surviving fragments of the Forest of Braydon – lies a string of small hills, where the old economy of the claylands endures, altered by the demands of modern life, but rooted, for all that, in customs that are part of the landscape. Narrow roads wind between farms that bear names familiar since records began: Braydonside, Washpool, Stoppers Hill, Moor Lane, Pink Lane, Rouselands, Sunde Hill. They are places of deep settlement, where families draw their nourishment as trees draw nourishment from the soil. And the farmers bear their increasing burdens as trees bear the weather, knowing that to be uprooted is to die."

The experience of settling here and becoming immersed in taking care of the land and being taken care of by our neighbors led to the idea that the impulse to protect the environment begins with the love of home, or 'oikophilia' — a term Roger coins in his book *Green Philosophy – How to think seriously about the planet* (2013). He says: "I argue that environmental problems must be addressed by all of us in our everyday circumstances, and should not be confiscated by the state. Their solution is possible only if people are motivated to confront them, and the task of government is to create the conditions in which the right kind of motive can emerge and solidify. I describe this motive (or rather, family of motives) as oikophilia, the love and feeling

for home, and I set out the conditions in which oikophilia arises and the task of the state in making room for it. I defend local initiatives against global schemes, civil association against political activism, and small-scale institutions of friendship against large-scale and purpose-driven campaigns."

Life at Sunde Hill Farm, or 'Scrutopia', as it is affectionately nicknamed, is based on a personal connection to the surroundings and to those people past and present who have looked after the land. It can offer we who live here and visitors alike a sense of place and fulfilment where the land bares the imprint of human life and makes one feel at home. ▀



Sophie De Courcy - Scruton
Founder of "Scrutopia"
with Roger Scruton

Environmental problems must be addressed by all of us in our everyday circumstances, and should not be confiscated by the state. Their solution is possible only if people are motivated to confront them.



THE LIVING WORLD NEEDS GUARDIANS

Baudouin de Saint Léger

Europe faces a paradox. Never has biodiversity occupied such a prominent place in public debate. Governments, institutions and international organisations devote considerable attention to protecting species, habitats and ecosystems. Yet, at the very moment environmental concerns have become mainstream, many of the people who live closest to nature increasingly feel portrayed not as part of the solution, but as part of the problem. This divide is more than political. It is cultural. At its heart lies a fundamental disagreement about the relationship between people and the natural world. One vision sees nature primarily as a fragile space that must be protected from human intervention. The other recognises that human communities, when rooted in place and acting responsibly, can actively contribute to ecological balance. The future of Europe's landscapes may depend on which of these visions prevails.

Europe is not a wilderness continent. It never has been. Its forests, meadows, wetlands, hedgerows and open landscapes are the product of centuries of interaction between human societies and the environments they inhabit. The European landscape is not

untouched nature. It is a cultural landscape, shaped by generations of farmers, fishermen, foresters, shepherds and hunters. This historical reality matters because it challenges a growing assumption within parts of the environmental debate: that conservation and human activity are fundamentally opposed.

In much of Europe, the opposite is often true. The disappearance of human stewardship can be just as damaging as overexploitation. When rural communities decline, landscapes close, habitats disappear, traditional ecological knowledge is lost and biodiversity frequently suffers alongside the people who once sustained it. Environmental policy cannot therefore be reduced to a choice between protection and exploitation. It must also be understood through the lens of responsibility.

Every day, millions of Europeans exercise that responsibility, often without recognition. Farmers monitor the health of their soils and ecosystems. Fishermen witness changes in aquatic environments long before they appear in official reports. Hunters observe wildlife populations, migration patterns, habitat degradation and the spread of invasive species. Their knowledge is practical, acquired through continuous presence on the land and on the water.

The European landscape is not untouched nature. It is a cultural landscape, shaped by generations of farmers, fishermen, foresters, shepherds and hunters.

At a time when public policy increasingly relies on data, it would be a mistake to overlook one of Europe's most valuable sources of environmental knowledge: the men and women whose livelihoods, traditions and daily lives remain directly connected to nature. This reality is particularly visible within the hunting community. Across Europe, hunting has evolved significantly over recent decades. The image of hunting as a purely extractive activity no longer reflects the reality of many territories. Hunters contribute to wildlife monitoring, habitat restoration, wetland management, scientific surveys and species regulation. In many regions, they are among the most active investors in biodiversity conservation. The François Sommer Foundation's white paper *Hunting, Nature and Society 2040* rightly argues that the right to hunt carries with it a duty to conserve. This principle reflects a broader truth: sustainable human activities do not flourish against nature. They flourish alongside it.

“Every generation inherits landscapes it did not create. Forests planted by previous generations provide shade today.”

For much of the twentieth century, environmentalism was built around the concept of protection. Faced with habitat destruction and species decline, that ambition was necessary and justified. Today, however, protection alone is no longer sufficient. The central challenge facing Europe is not simply how to preserve isolated natural areas. It is how to ensure the long-term stewardship of inhabited landscapes. That stewardship cannot be delivered by regulations alone. It requires communities with deep roots in the territories they inhabit. It requires the transmission of knowledge, practices and responsibilities across generations. Too often, contemporary environmental debates are shaped by what might be described as an ecology of distance: perspectives developed primarily through institutions, urban centres and administrative frameworks. Such approaches remain valuable, but they can become disconnected from local realities. An ecology of presence offers an essential complement. Grounded in direct experience, it allows environmental change to be detected quickly, management practices to be adapted pragmatically and ecological challenges to be understood in their

full complexity. The challenge is not that one approach exists. The challenge is that the two are too often presented as incompatible.

WHO WILL PAY FOR NATURE?

One question remains surprisingly absent from public debate: who will finance conservation in the decades ahead? Europe's environmental ambitions have never been greater. Restoring wetlands, protecting endangered species, rebuilding hedgerow networks, preserving ecological corridors, combating invasive species, preventing wildfires and adapting to climate change all require substantial investment. Behind every restored hectare and every protected habitat lies a simple reality: conservation comes at a cost. A law does not restore a pond. A decree does not maintain a meadow. A directive does not clear undergrowth in a forest exposed to wildfire risk. Environmental goals must ultimately be translated into concrete action on

the ground. Across Europe, thousands of local actors devote time, expertise and financial resources to the stewardship of natural environments. Farmers maintain open habitats that support biodiversity. Foresters manage woodlands increasingly affected by droughts and storms. Hunters finance habitat improvement, wildlife surveys and conservation initiatives aimed at maintaining healthy wildlife populations. Their contribution often receives little attention, yet it represents one of the most tangible pillars of European conservation. This is not merely a financial issue. It is also a philosophical one. A protected natural environment cannot rely indefinitely on ever-increasing public expenditure at a time when governments face mounting fiscal pressures. Conservation must also rest upon communities that find purpose, responsibility and commitment in preserving the territories they inhabit.

For several decades, Western societies have developed a paradoxical relationship with nature. We readily acknowledge its ecological and cultural importance, yet often hesitate to recognise its economic value. What has no value ultimately struggles to find

defenders. The future of European biodiversity will depend on our ability to reconcile these dimensions. Conservation should not be viewed solely as a cost. It is also an investment in resilient territories, thriving landscapes and the transmission of a shared heritage.

WHO WILL CARE FOR NATURE TOMORROW?

A second challenge deserves far greater attention. Across much of Europe, the communities that have traditionally maintained close relationships with the natural world are ageing. Farmers are retiring. Small-scale fishermen are becoming fewer. In many regions, hunting associations struggle to attract younger generations. The issue is not only demographic. It is cultural. For centuries, environmental knowledge was transmitted through practice. Children learned to read landscapes alongside parents and grandparents. They discovered the rhythms of seasons, wildlife behaviour and land management not through textbooks, but through experience. Modern societies have gained enormously from urbanisation and technological progress. Yet they have also created a growing distance between people and the ecosystems upon which they ultimately depend.

Scientific expertise remains indispensable. Satellite imagery can reveal changes in vegetation cover. Ecological models can identify long-term trends. But expertise alone cannot replace presence. The future of conservation depends not only on protecting species and habitats. It also depends on preserving the human capacity to understand and care for them. Every generation inherits landscapes it did not create. Forests planted by previous generations provide shade today. Wetlands restored decades ago continue to support wildlife. Hedgerows maintained by farmers long since gone still shelter countless species. Stewardship is therefore always an act of transmission. Without transmission, conservation becomes fragile. Protected areas may remain on maps, but the living relationships that sustain landscapes gradually disappear. A society that loses its guardians eventually risks losing more than knowledge. It risks losing its ability to care.

BEYOND CONSERVATION

This challenge increasingly mirrors a broader cultural fracture between urban and rural Europe. Over recent decades, rural populations have declined, traditional livelihoods have weakened and local knowledge has gradually lost visibility within public discourse. Practices inherited from previous generations are frequently judged solely according to their immediate utility.

Hunting illustrates this phenomenon particularly clearly. Public debate often focuses on the act of hunting itself while paying far less attention to what

hunting represents culturally. Yet hunting is not simply a leisure activity. It is also part of Europe's intangible heritage. Hunting with hounds, duck hunting and traditional regional practices embody stories, skills, rituals and local identities that connect communities to particular landscapes. This does not mean every tradition should remain frozen in time. All human practices evolve. But neither should we assume that traditions have no value simply because they are old. A society that loses its traditions often loses part of its ability to understand the places from which those traditions emerged.

This ultimately raises a broader question of resilience. Wildfires, floods, droughts, invasive species and emerging animal diseases are becoming increasingly common across Europe. In each case, the first people to observe environmental change are often those who live and work closest to the land. Their observations, accumulated day after day and year after year, represent an invaluable source of knowledge. They allow environmental change to be identified earlier, management practices to be adapted more rapidly and local ecosystems to be understood in ways that no centralised system can fully replicate. In an era increasingly defined by uncertainty, this capacity for adaptation has become one of Europe's greatest environmental assets. Europe now faces a choice. One path frames humanity and nature as permanent adversaries. The other recognises that long-term conservation depends upon cooperation between them. The stakes extend far beyond hunting, fishing or agriculture. They concern the place of human beings within the living world itself. Europe's environmental future will not be secured by regulations alone. Laws, strategies and protected areas remain essential, but they cannot replace the people who manage landscapes on a daily basis. Farmers, fishermen, foresters and hunters form part of a living network of stewardship that connects communities to the natural world. Conservation ultimately depends not only on protecting nature, but on maintaining the human commitment required to care for it. If Europe wishes to preserve its biodiversity over the long term, it must recognise that thriving ecosystems and thriving rural communities are not competing objectives. They are deeply interconnected. The living world needs guardians, and those guardians need a place within the environmental future we are building. ▀



Baudouin de Saint Léger
Editor-in-chief "So Chasse"



The Sea as a TRUST

REFLECTIONS ON
CONSERVATIVE ECOLOGY
AND THE GOVERNANCE
OF MARITIME SPACES

Gian Piero Joime

THE SEA AS A CIVILIZATIONAL CHALLENGE

The seas of the world do not await political definition. They have always been what they are: the primordial matrix of human civilization, the oldest corridors of commerce and culture, upon which the prosperity and identity of peoples have always depended.

A foundational principle must be stated at the outset, for it governs everything that follows. For eco-conservatism, the sea is neither an untouchable wilderness from which human activity must be excluded nor a liquid highway for the globalization of consumption. It is a vital historical and geopolitical space whose ecology must be safeguarded with pragmatism, authority, and a sense of responsibility towards both the past and the future of the civilizations that border its shores. This distinction—between stewardship and prohibition, between civilizational governance and technocratic administration—constitutes the axis upon which an authentically conservative maritime policy must be built.

Edmund Burke's intergenerational covenant—the recognition that every generation holds the natural

and institutional order in trust rather than in ownership—applies to the sea no less than to the land. Roger Scruton's *oikophilia*—the ecological responsibility that springs from attachment to particular and concrete places—finds some of its oldest and most enduring expressions in the communities that have lived from and with the sea across generations: the fisherman who understands the seasonal rhythms of his coastal

waters; the island community whose identity has been shaped by its relationship with a particular stretch of sea; the port city whose economy and culture are inseparable from maritime life.

These are not merely matters of sentiment, though not only they depend on them. They represent the living embodiment of the ecological integration

that progressive environmentalism has long aspired to achieve but has never fully realized: a relationship with the natural world that endures precisely because it is rooted, particular, and intergenerational.

Decades of international and European environmental legislation—from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS, 1982) to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008),

It is a vital historical and geopolitical space whose ecology must be safeguarded with pragmatism, authority, and a sense of responsibility towards both the past and the future of the civilizations that border its shores.

from successive reforms of the Common Fisheries Policy to the legislative packages associated with the European Green Deal—have approached the seas primarily as regulatory problems: spaces to be managed through standards, targets, prohibitions, and mechanisms of compliance. This approach has undoubtedly produced tangible achievements in particular fields. Yet it has failed to generate a maritime policy commensurate with the scale of the challenge. Instead, it has produced a succession of sectoral interventions, each coherent within its own institutional logic, but collectively incapable of addressing the integrated character of the maritime question, which is simultaneously ecological, strategic, economic, and civilizational.

The central argument of this essay is that the capacity to reconcile the conservation of marine ecosystems with the energy, logistical, commercial, industrial, and security policies of coastal States—thereby transforming the protection of the world's seas into a source of geopolitical stability and shared prosperity—constitutes the defining test of ecological and political maturity in the twenty-first century.

Such a synthesis cannot be achieved simply by adding further layers of regulation to those already in place. It requires a transformation in the philosophy of governance itself: a movement from treating nature as an external object to be administered toward understanding it as the constitutive foundation

of the communities whose existence depends upon it. In practical terms, this means linking conservation objectives to the communities most deeply committed to achieving them; designing energy and infrastructure policies that acknowledge the ecological vulnerability of maritime spaces; and constructing frameworks of cooperative governance founded upon mutual interest rather than regulatory conditionality. In short, it means governing the sea as a living order rather than administering it as a regulated zone.

The political tradition possessing the intellectual resources necessary to meet this challenge is the conservative tradition itself—with its enduring concern for stewardship, intergenerational responsibility, and the constitutive role of natural limits in sustaining political order. Yet this tradition has been largely displaced from the maritime debate by a progressive environmentalism whose regulatory instincts have proved, in the end, to be structurally inadequate to the task before it.

BIODIVERSITY, IDENTITY, AND THE ECOLOGY OF THE WORLD'S COASTS

The seas cover 71% (seventy-one per cent) of the Earth's surface and generate more than half of the planet's oxygen. They regulate the global climate, absorb approximately 30% (thirty per cent) of anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions, and provide food security for more than three billion people, for whom fish remains the primary source of animal protein (FAO, 2022). They are not a peripheral concern of environmental policy. They are the biological foundation of human civilization.

The world's marine ecosystems are now subject to systemic pressure. According to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2021), the Oceans warming, deoxygenation, and acidification are altering marine species and ecosystems across every ocean basin. The Great Barrier Reef has lost more than half of its coral cover since 1995 (AIMS, 2022). Arctic sea ice has declined by approx-

imately 13 % (thirteen per cent) per decade since 1979 (NASA, 2023), profoundly altering the ecology of the polar seas and the livelihoods of the Indigenous communities that have depended upon them for millennia. Global fish stocks are likewise under extraordinary pressure. FAO estimates that 35 % (thirty-five per cent) of the world's fish stocks are currently exploit-

ed at biologically unsustainable levels, with the highest rates of overexploitation recorded in the Mediterranean and in the Black Sea, where more than 75 % (seventy-five per cent) of assessed stocks are harvested beyond maximum sustainable yield (FAO, 2022).

The Mediterranean concentrates these global pressures within an enclosed basin of extraordinary biological richness. Although it accounts for less than 1% (one per cent) of the world's oceanic surface, it harbours approximately 7 % (seven per cent) of all known marine species, including 28% (twenty-eight per cent) of those found nowhere else on Earth (IUCN, 2022). Its particular vulnerability arises from its enclosed character: warm waters that renew themselves only slowly, requiring between eighty and one hundred years to complete a full renewal cycle, within a basin subjected to the cumulative pressures of intensive coastal urbanization, commercial shipping, offshore hydrocarbon exploitation, and the thermal stress associated with climate change. The influx of tropical non-native species entering through the Suez Canal is progressively transforming the ecological structure of

a sea that has sustained human civilization for more than three millennia.

Marine biodiversity, however, is never merely a biological fact. It is equally a cultural and civilizational one. The species that define the world's maritime heritage—from Mediterranean sea bass and red mullet to Norwegian cod, Japanese bonito tuna, and the round sardinella of West Africa—cannot simply be replaced by aquaculture or imported substitutes. They are the products of particular ecological conditions, particular fishing techniques, and particular traditions accumulated over centuries. Their disappearance diminishes far more than the global supply of protein. It severs the historical bond between a people and the sea that has shaped its identity.

This is what the conservative tradition understands by inheritance: not an artifact preserved behind glass, but a living legacy that sustains identity, community, and the possibility of continuity across generations. To defend marine biodiversity means, in the most literal sense, to defend what coastal peoples are.

Climate change acts as a multiplier of these threats. It amplifies the consequences of overfishing by weakening the resilience of already stressed fish stocks. It intensifies the effects of coastal development by accelerating the erosion of natural coastal defences.

It also generates new geopolitical tensions by altering the distribution of fish stocks across national boundaries, displacing resources that have historically underpinned bilateral agreements and systems of informal maritime governance.

Overcoming the present crisis requires moving beyond a purely restrictive conception of environmental protection. Uniform prohibitions imposed from above, without regard for local ecological conditions, without engaging the communities most directly dependent upon the health of the sea, and without distinguishing between industrial exploitation and artisanal stewardship, do not ultimately preserve marine biodiversity. Instead, they burden precisely those communities whose livelihoods and identities are most closely bound to the conservation of coasts and seas, while leaving the underlying structural pressures fundamentally untouched.

An authentically conservative ecology of the sea begins not with prohibition but with stewardship: with the active governance of maritime spaces by those whose future depends upon their ecological integrity, operating within a framework of general rules that defines the limits of sustainable use rather than treating human presence itself as a liability to be curtailed.

The conservative tradition offers two complementary arguments for the superiority of this approach over the progressive regulatory model. The first is epistemological. The knowledge required for effective maritime governance is dispersed among the communities that

inhabit coastal waters rather than concentrated within distant regulatory authorities. Fishermen, maritime cooperatives, port communities, and coastal municipalities possess forms of practical knowledge accumulated across generations—knowledge of seasonal rhythms, ecological thresholds, migratory patterns, and local marine habitats—that no centralized bureaucracy can fully replicate. The sea is too complex, too dynamic, and too deeply embedded in particular places to be governed solely through abstract regulation.

The second argument concerns incentives. Communities endowed with clear, stable, and long-term rules governing access to marine resources possess a direct intergenerational interest in their conservation. Stewardship generates voluntary compliance, continuous local monitoring, and that sense of civic responsibility toward the natural world which Roger Scruton regarded as the indispensable foundation of an enduring ecological culture. Conservation imposed from without demands ever more regulation; stewardship rooted within a community gradually becomes self-sustaining.

The sea is not a sanctuary withdrawn from human use. Nor is it a reservoir of resources awaiting unrestricted exploitation. It is a common inheritance, and common inheritances require governance by those who dwell within them rather than administration by institutions that regulate them from afar.

THE ARTISANAL FISHERMAN AND THE ECO-CONSERVATIVE MODEL

Small-scale fisheries across the world provide employment for approximately 600 million people, including upstream and downstream activities, and sustain the livelihoods of some 40 million fishers, the overwhelming majority of whom work in developing and coastal nations (FAO, 2022). In the Mediterranean alone, approximately 300,000 professional fishers are employed in small, family-owned enterprises operating vessels under twelve metres in length, harvesting coastal waters through knowledge accumulated across generations (GFCM, 2023). In Norway, the coastal fishing communities of the Lofoten archipelago have practised sustainable cod fishing for more than a millennium. In Japan, the ama—predominantly women free-divers—continue to harvest abalone and shellfish from coastal waters using techniques that have remained fundamentally unchanged since antiquity. Along the coasts of West Africa, the artisanal pirogues of Senegal and Ghana sustain both the protein security and the cultural identity of millions of coastal families. These are not marginal economic activities. They represent the human face of the oldest—and arguably the most enduring—relationship between civilization and the sea.

These communities embody ecological integration in its most tangible form—not as an abstract theoretical paradigm, but as a lived reality. The artisanal fisherman

who has worked the same coastal waters for forty years carries within him a knowledge of seasonal rhythms, species behaviour, reproductive cycles, and habitat conditions that no satellite monitoring programme or scientific survey can fully replicate. The sustainable practices of small-scale coastal fisheries—the rotation of fishing grounds, respect for spawning seasons, and the use of selective gear calibrated to local species—are not products of regulatory compliance. They arise from the very logic of intergenerational stewardship that Edmund Burke recognized as the foundation of every enduring political order. The local fisherman possesses a direct intergenerational interest in ensuring that his sea is not exhausted. This is oikophilia in its most literal and concrete expression.

The paradox of European and international fisheries governance is therefore deeply instructive. Compliance costs designed for industrial-scale operators systematically disadvantage precisely those communities whose practices are most consistent with genuine ecological sustainability. Meanwhile, the structural threats to marine ecosystems—illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing conducted by large industrial fleets with neither attachment to place nor interest in the long-term condition of marine habitats; the thermal disruption of reproductive cycles caused by climate change; and the contamination of coastal ecosystems by plastics and hydrocarbons—continue largely unabated. Addressing these challenges requires diplomatic resolve and robust enforcement capacities that international institutions have too often proved reluctant to deploy with the same determination they devote to regulating domestic artisanal fisheries.

The conservative alternative is structural rather than merely regulatory. Fishing quotas and access rights should be linked to artisanal coastal communities that employ selective techniques transmitted across generations, rather than allocated through systems that reward the scale of capital irrespective of ecological practice. Such an approach preserves fish stocks because it aligns the incentives of those with the deepest ecological knowledge with the objectives of conservation policy. It preserves the socio-economic fabric and cultural identity of coastal communities because it recognizes them as the first line of maritime governance rather than as passive objects of administrative management. And it achieves more durable conservation outcomes than prohibition imposed from above because both ecological knowledge and compliance are embedded within the community itself rather than enforced from without.

The institutional mechanism that gives practical expression to this principle is the system of Territorial Use Rights in Fisheries (TURFs), developed most notably in Chile, Japan, and New Zealand, and increasingly adopted through pilot programmes across the

Mediterranean. Under a TURF regime, clearly defined coastal areas are entrusted to specific fishing communities as an exclusive and intergenerational patrimony: not a licence to extract resources, but a custodial right over a living ecosystem. This is co-management in the conservative sense of the term: the recognition that a community's pre-existing relationship with a particular maritime territory constitutes the very foundation of both its rights and its responsibilities of governance.

Energy, Ports, and Maritime Infrastructure WHERE STRATEGY MEETS ECOLOGY

The world's seas are the arteries of the global energy system. Approximately sixty per cent of the world's oil production is transported by sea, while liquefied natural gas (LNG)—whose role in the global energy mix has expanded significantly in the wake of the Russian disruption of 2022—is transported exclusively by maritime routes. The strategic chokepoints through which this energy flows—the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca, the Suez Canal, Bab el-Mandeb, and the Turkish Straits—are simultaneously marine ecosystems, commercial corridors, and geopolitical pressure points. Their governance is inseparable from the ecological governance of the seas in which they are situated. The Suez Canal, for instance, is more than a commercial artery: since its opening, it has served as the principal gateway through which more than a thousand tropical species have entered the Mediterranean, transforming the ecological structure of an enclosed sea shaped over millennia. Energy governance and ecological governance are not parallel policy domains. They are, in reality, one and the same challenge.

The Mediterranean embodies this logic with particular clarity. Although it accounts for barely 1 % (one per cent) of the world's oceanic surface, it carries approximately twenty per cent of global maritime traffic and 65% (sixty-five per cent) of the energy flows destined for Europe (EIA, 2024). The war in Ukraine accelerated a structural realignment that had already begun. Europe's principal energy axis, once extending from East to West through continental pipeline networks, has been fundamentally reconfigured. Energy now flows predominantly from south to north, across the Mediterranean; and in 2023 fossil fuels still supplied approximately 69 % (sixty-nine per cent) of the European Union's primary energy demand, while overall import dependency stood at 58.4 % (fifty-eight dot four per cent) (Eurostat, 2024).

The renewable energy dimension of maritime strategy is no less consequential. The offshore wind capacity currently under development in the North Sea, the Baltic, the Mediterranean, and the waters of East Asia represents one of the largest industrial transformations ever undertaken within the marine

environment. The United Kingdom, Germany, and Denmark have jointly developed more than 30 GW (thirty gigawatts) of offshore wind capacity (IRENA, 2023), with future expansion requiring the installation of thousands of additional turbines across marine ecosystems whose long-term ecological responses to large-scale industrial intervention remain only partially understood. Equally significant is the largely unrealised solar potential of the Southern Mediterranean arc, stretching from Morocco to Egypt, one of the regions receiving the highest levels of solar irradiation on the planet. Its underdevelopment reflects not a lack of technological feasibility but the absence of the cooperative governance frameworks capable of translating that potential into reality.

The port dimension of maritime energy and commercial policy deserves particular attention because it reveals, with exceptional clarity, the convergence of strategic and ecological concerns. Over the past fifteen years, China has systematically acquired controlling interests or significant stakes in port infrastructure across the Mediterranean and beyond: Piraeus in Greece, Valencia in Spain, Haifa in Israel, Vado Ligure and Genoa in Italy—with Taranto and Trieste identified as further strategic objectives—as well as Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Gwadar in Pakistan, and numerous facilities throughout Sub-Saharan Africa (OECD, 2018). For China, these acquisitions are not merely exercises in commercial opportunism.

They constitute a deliberate projection of influence over the logistical architecture of global trade and energy supply.

Port infrastructures operating under inadequate environmental oversight impose their costs directly upon the surrounding marine ecosystems.

Ecological and strategic vulnerability are therefore not separate conditions. They are different manifestations of the same underlying reality.

The submarine infrastructure of the world's seas—gas pipelines, electricity interconnectors, and fibre-optic communication cables—add a further ecological dimension that maritime governance has too often underestimated. The sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines in September 2022 was not merely a strategic event: the uncontrolled release of methane into a semi-enclosed sea generated cascading consequences for marine biodiversity and for the trophic systems of adjacent waters. In the Mediterranean, whose seabed hosts the Greenstream pipeline, the Trans Adriatic Pipeline, and the TransMed system, the logic of hybrid warfare assumes an immediately ecological character. A deliberate attack on submarine infrastructure would simultaneously disrupt energy security and degrade a marine ecosystem already subjected to exceptional environmental stress. The protection of critical maritime infrastructure is therefore both a strategic imperative and an ecological one—a truth that an authentically eco-conservative maritime policy must place at the very centre of its analysis.

The convergence of continued dependence upon fossil fuels, the ecological pressures generated by the expansion of renewable energy infrastructure, strategic competition for control of port systems, and the growing threat of hybrid attacks against submarine networks defines what may be called the maritime energy paradox: the seas that possess the greatest potential to strengthen long-term energy security are precisely those most vulnerable to the ecological consequences of fragmented governance. This paradox is not technological. It is political. It is the direct consequence of decades of governance that artificially separated energy security from ecological responsibility, treating the sea as infrastructure while overlooking the elementary truth that every infrastructure is embedded within a living ecological system.

For the conservative tradition, such a separation between the economic order and the natural one has no foundation in reality. It exists only within the ideology of unlimited growth. Overcoming this paradox therefore requires governing the sea for what it truly is: simultaneously an energy corridor, an ecological system, and a civilizational inheritance.



Photo by Eddie Mark Blair on Unsplash

71% the percentage of Earth's surface covered by the world's seas	>1/2 the share of the planet's oxygen produced by the seas	~30% the share of human CO ₂ emissions absorbed by the seas	>3 BILLION PEOPLE depend on fish as their primary source of protein	35% the share of world fish stocks currently exploited at biologically unsustainable levels (FAO, 2022)
~600 MILLION PEOPLE employed by the world's small-scale fisheries, including upstream and downstream activities (FAO, 2022)	~40 MILLION fishers working in small-scale fisheries globally (FAO, 2022)	<1% the share of the world's ocean surface represented by the Mediterranean	~7% the share of all known marine species hosted by the Mediterranean	28% the share of Mediterranean species found nowhere else on Earth (IUCN, 2022)

80-100 YEARS the time required for the Mediterranean's full water renewal cycle	>75% the share of assessed fish stocks in the Mediterranean and Black Sea fished beyond maximum sustainable yield (FAO, 2022)	20% the share of global maritime traffic carried by the Mediterranean	65% the share of energy flows bound for Europe carried by the Mediterranean (EIA, World Oil Transit Chokepoints, 2024)	~300 THOUSANDS professional fishermen working in small-scale, artisanal operations in the Mediterranean (GFCM, 2023)
>1/2 the coral cover lost by the Great Barrier Reef since 1995 (Australian Institute of Marine Science, 2022)	~13% PER DECADE the decline in Arctic sea ice extent since 1979 (NASA, 2023)	~60% the share of global oil production transported by sea	~69% the share of European Union primary energy requirements met by fossil fuels in 2023 (Eurostat, 2024)	58.4% the European Union's overall energy import dependency (Eurostat, 2024)

Governing the Sea
A CONSERVATIVE
FRAMEWORK FOR SHARED
MARITIME SPACES

The governance of the world's oceans confronts an immediate structural challenge that distinguishes it from most other domains of environmental policy: the seas are shared among sovereign States, each exercising exclusive jurisdiction over its territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zone, each pursuing distinct interests, possessing different capabilities, and embedded within different geopolitical relationships. No single authority can govern the oceans. Any effective framework for maritime governance must therefore work with, rather than against, this plurality of sovereign jurisdictions.

The existing multilateral architecture—including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Regional Seas Conventions, and the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries—has produced valuable legal frameworks and fostered important forms of operational cooperation. Yet it has not generated the integrated capacity for governance that the scale of the contemporary maritime challenge demands. The reasons are structural. These agreements were designed primarily to manage conflicts of interest among sovereign states rather than to cultivate the cooperative stewardship of common goods that the ecological crisis now requires. They operate through consensus reduced to the lowest common denominator rather than through the binding commitments upon which effective environmental governance ultimately depends.

The eco-conservative response to this deficit is not the creation of yet another supranational institution—a project that would require transfers of sovereignty that States are neither willing nor, arguably, obliged to concede, while lacking the local knowledge indispensable to effective implementation. It is instead the construction of a dense network of structured bilateral and multilateral relationships, grounded in mutual interest and operating within a framework of shared principles, while leaving operational authority to the states and communities closest to the specific conditions to be governed. This is subsidiarity understood not as a rhetorical concession to national sensitivities but as a genuine constitutional principle: the recognition that the knowledge necessary for the effective governance of marine systems is dispersed among the communities

that inhabit their coastlines rather than concentrated within a central regulatory authority. The institutional architecture may be expressed in straightforward terms. Binding ecological and strategic principles are established at the highest level of shared authority—whether European, regional, or international. Operational implementation is entrusted to the Member States and to the communities closest to the ecological realities in question. Enforcement against those who violate the shared principles—illegal fishing fleets, port operators that disregard environmental standards, or States that instrumentalize migratory flows for geopolitical leverage—becomes a collective responsibility, exercised through the diplomatic, economic, and, where necessary, military instruments available to cooperating states. The principles are non-negotiable. The methods are local. Enforcement is shared.

Photo by Ant Rozetsky on Unsplash



Photo by samuel hanna on Unsplash

The Mediterranean offers the clearest test case for such an approach. Italy should shape its relationships with Libya, Algeria, and Tunisia as the principal energy and migration corridor of the Southern Mediterranean. Greece should develop its partnerships with Egypt and the States of the Eastern Mediterranean as the strategic eastern pillar of the basin. Spain should govern its relationship with Morocco and the Western Mediterranean as the Atlantic-Mediterranean crossroads. The European framework should define the ecological, strategic, and diplomatic principles within which these bilateral relationships operate: the non-negotiable limits of sustainable use, the strategic red lines, and the minimum standards of environmental governance, while leaving operational decisions to the Member States and to the communities most intimately acquainted with local conditions. Such a model also requires, alongside its bilateral dimension, a shared enforcement backstop: an integrated maritime security capability equipped with common surveillance assets, sustained investment in strengthening the institutional capacities of partner States along the Southern shore of the Mediterranean, and the explicit incorporation of maritime ecological

security into the strategic mandates of European defence. The sabotage of a submarine gas pipeline and the systematic depletion of a shared fish stock are, in different ways, attacks upon the common inheritance. Both therefore require a proportionate and collective response. The principles are non-negotiable. The methods are local. Enforcement is shared.

This is not the model embodied by the European Green Deal, which sought to impose uniform standards largely irrespective of local conditions and differentiated capacities for governance. It is instead the application of the conservative tradition to international maritime governance: subsidiarity understood as a genuine constitutional principle rather than as a rhetorical formula. Italy's Mattei Plan represents the most significant attempt in recent years to give practical expression to this vision. It seeks to construct bilateral partnerships founded upon mutual interest, operating within a framework of shared ecological and strategic principles, with the long-term ambition of transforming Europe from a mere consumer of Mediterranean resources into a genuine steward of the Mediterranean commons.

THE SEA REQUIRES GOVERNANCE, NOT ADMINISTRATION

The world's oceans present the same fundamental challenge across every basin, every enclosed sea, and every coastal space: the challenge of governing common goods that no single authority controls, and that simultaneously constitute ecological systems, economic resources, strategic corridors, and civilizational inheritances. They cannot be reduced to any one of these dimensions without distorting—and ultimately undermining—all of them.

The progressive environmentalism that has dominated international maritime policy over the past three decades has failed to meet this challenge because it has approached the sea primarily as an administrative-ecological problem: a space to be regulated, a set of targets to be achieved, a compliance regime to be enforced. It has produced systems that are each internally coherent yet collectively insufficient. It has systematically disadvantaged the communities most closely aligned with genuine ecological stewardship, while failing to address the structural threats—industrial overfishing, Chinese acquisition of ports, hybrid warfare against infrastructure, and climate-driven ecosystem disruption—that require political, not merely regulatory, responses.

From this diagnosis follow, within the conceptual horizon of eco-conservatism, six interdependent axes of intervention.

The first and foundational axis is the ecological stewardship of the sea itself: linking fishing rights to artisanal coastal communities, enforcing sustainable management across all operators regardless of flag, and protecting the biological infrastructure—spawning grounds, Posidonia seagrass meadows, coral systems—upon which the productivity of marine ecosystems ultimately depends.

The second axis is energy sovereignty: securing fossil fuel supply through frameworks of bilateral partnership while simultaneously developing genuinely cooperative renewable infrastructure along the world's most productive solar and wind corridors, and ensuring that manufacturing capacity and governance chains remain within the reach of democratic oversight.

The third axis is the governance of ports and infrastructure: building regional capacity to enforce environmental and safety standards in maritime infrastructure

irrespective of operator ownership, and developing the surveillance and defence capabilities required to protect submarine systems from hybrid threats.

The fourth axis is the preservation of coastal communities: designing fisheries, tourism, and coastal development policies that treat the ecological and cultural specificity of maritime communities not as a constraint to be managed, but as a resource to be sustained and an inheritance to be safeguarded.

The fifth axis is cooperative governance: constructing networks of bilateral and regional relationships grounded in mutual interest, which remain the only viable mechanism for governing shared maritime spaces among sovereign States.

The sixth axis is climate adaptation: investing in the resilience of marine ecosystems to thermal and environmental stress, recognising that a weakened sea translates directly into strategic and economic vulnerability at a scale that no amount of energy or defence investment can subsequently offset.

These six axes are not aspirational statements. They are the minimum conditions for a maritime policy adequate to the scale of the challenge. Underlying them all is a single proposition: that the health of a civilisation is measured not by what it produces, but by what it preserves and transmits. Applied to the sea, this is not a romantic principle. It is a political one.

The world's oceans do not ask to be saved. They ask to be governed—with the same intergenerational responsibility with which coastal communities have lived alongside them for centuries. This is the task of eco-conservatism applied to the maritime realm: not the external administration of nature, but the recognition that the human order and the natural order are, and have always been, one and the same reality.

The sea is neither a sanctuary nor a highway. It is a living space—the most ancient and enduring mirror of human civilisation. ▀



Gian Piero Joime

Essayist Professor of Environmental Economics, and Board Member of Italian "ENEA"

The Suez Canal, for instance, is more than a commercial artery: since its opening, it has served as the principal gateway through which more than a thousand tropical species have entered the Mediterranean, transforming the ecological structure of an enclosed sea shaped over millennia.



Photo by Devon Divine on Unsplash



DWELLING IN THE WORLD

Nativity as the Foundation of a Human Ecology

Aziliz Le Corre

In 1951, in his essay *Building Dwelling Thinking*, Martin Heidegger drew a fundamental philosophical distinction between housing and dwelling. Housing is the roof over our heads; it offers comfort and security. Dwelling is the place where we put down roots, where being fulfils itself. The former is functional; the latter is existential. In the aftermath of the Second World War, when nearly half of Berlin's buildings lay in ruins and the shortage of housing was acute, Heidegger refused to reduce the question of dwelling to a matter of real-estate accounting. He diagnosed something far graver: an anthropological rupture in the way we inhabit the world. Late modernity had severed the bond between man and the natural world, he argued, citing industrial agriculture as an example, which seeks to exploit nature rather than to sustain man's connection with the earth. Driven by technological growth, human beings had ceased to feel at home in the world.

This crisis of dwelling, we are living today in a form Heidegger could not have anticipated. Among OECD countries, fertility rates now average 1.46, well below the level required to ensure demographic

renewal. France, unlike its European neighbours, long resisted the process of demographic decline spreading across the Western world. But for fifteen years, the fall in births has been unrelenting. The year 2025 passed a critical threshold, recording more deaths than births. Only 645,000 babies were born on French soil last year, a total fertility rate of 1.56 children per woman.

Despite this vertiginous decline, antinatalist discourse has flooded public debate over the past decade.

For a genuinely human ecology does not set man against nature; it integrates them into a single ecosystem, from plant to human being, without placing them on an equal footing.

The No Kids movement advocates the voluntary restriction of births, elevated to an environmental virtue; certain feminist currents, carried by the *childfree* movement, equate motherhood with the subjugation of women. Both currents obey the same logic: that of a political ecology which instrumentalises legitimate

environmental concerns in order to turn them against civilisation itself. In its most radical forms, it proceeds from an anthropopessimist assumption: man is the problem. His growth, his fertility, his productive activity are destructive. The solution? Reduce the human population. All converge on the same conclusion: we must stop having children. In short, humanity could disappear, and we would be better off for it.

This new ideology demands that we cease to dwell altogether, that we cease to engender, that we close time in on the present, that we treat future humanity as a threat rather than a promise.

This logic is not new. It extends the theses Thomas Malthus formulated as early as 1798 in his *Essay on the Principle of Population*: demographic growth, necessarily faster than that of resources, leads inexorably to misery and famine. Births must therefore be regulated. The historical applications of this ideology have, however, been among the darkest of the twentieth century. In the 1970s, Indira Gandhi's India conducted forced sterilisation campaigns that affected millions of men and women among the poorest. The one-child policy, imposed in China from 1980 to 2015, led to forced abortions, female infanticide, and a demographic catastrophe from which the country still struggles to recover. Repainted green two centuries later, this old Malthusian spectre presents itself today under the guise of environmental virtue.

Yet reducing demography to save the planet amounts to treating the human population as a homogeneous mass, ignoring the colossal differences in ways of life. An American emits an average of eighteen tonnes of CO₂ per year; a Nigerian, 0.65 tonnes. What determines the state of the planet is not the number of human beings, but the economic and political mechanisms that organise their existence. Imagine we were half as numerous: would we pollute half as much? By no means. The supply of fuels, freed from demographic pressure, would be more abundant and fossil energies cheaper, making us more, not less, inclined to consume. Would wealthy states, already struggling to meet their climate commitments, submit to more coercive environmental policies? Populations tend to consume as much as available resources allow. Framing the question in terms of population makes it possible to defer the necessary questioning of our consumerist culture.

What we must rethink is our relationship with the world under a different paradigm.

Against political ecology, the ecology of civilisations takes seriously the fragility of the natural environment without sacrificing the continuity of the human species. For a genuinely human ecology does not set man against nature; it integrates them into a single ecosystem, from plant to human being, without placing them on an equal footing. Man remains at the top of the scale of values, which does not grant him the right to become the master and destroyer of nature, but obliges him to be its guardian.

The ecology of civilisations is rooted in a vision of time that allows for transmission. It thinks in terms of generations, heritages, debts to ancestors and obligations to descendants. It understands that concern for the environment is inseparable from concern for culture: the preservation of a protected species or an ancient forest is not opposed to the preservation of a language, an architecture, a way of life. The goal is not to freeze them, but to keep them alive. For rootedness in a history, a homeland, a culture is the foundation without which no responsibility is possible.

Faced with the temptation of non-being and withdrawal that political ecology carries, we shall affirm here that natality is the fundamental condition of our

existence and the survival of the civilisation that has borne us. For if we no longer bring children into the world, we have no future. And if there is no tomorrow, there is no longer a today or a yesterday, for there will be no one left to receive what we have inherited from our forebears.

To defend this thesis, we shall begin with the most intimate and foundational experience of dwelling: motherhood, which reveals to woman and to the world what it means to inscribe oneself in time and to transmit life. From there, we shall move towards the political, showing how love of home, what Roger Scruton calls "oikophilia" constitutes the affective structure of every enduring civilisation, from the household to the homeland. We shall see finally that philosophy itself, through Hannah Arendt and Hans Jonas, furnishes us with the means to think natality not as an ecological problem but as the condition of all responsibility towards the living and towards generations to come.

MOTHERHOOD AS THE FOUNDATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF DWELLING

If since Simone de Beauvoir certain feminist discourses have equated motherhood with the subjugation of women, I wish first to reaffirm its privilege. For freely chosen motherhood is not an alienation; it is a total experience, physical and temporal, which reveals to a woman a dimension of herself that no other experience can give her. It is in becoming a mother that a woman discovers not only her body in all its creative power, but also her own history, her own genealogy, her own femininity. It is in sheltering life that she comes to understand what she has received from those who came before her, and what she can give to those who will follow. This experience makes it possible to understand what constitutes the dwelling-place, from the mother's womb to the family home.

The experience of pregnancy is, first of all, a total experience of the body. But it is not merely biological; it is also phenomenological. It radically transforms the way a woman perceives the world, inhabits her own body, and situates herself in space and in time. The senses are transformed. Taste, smell, touch, hearing, sight: all were reconfigured. Food cravings change, formerly pleasant smells become unbearable, the taut skin of the belly calls for a different kind of touch, listening becomes more attentive to gentleness. But what is perhaps most remarkable is the transformation of the gaze: in looking inward, the pregnant

woman paradoxically opens her eyes wider to others. Pregnancy is a state that alters our way of being in the world, more spontaneous, drawn towards beauty and the desire to do good. As if the new life inhabiting the woman takes precedence over her ordinary self.

Space itself is modified. The pregnant woman instinctively protects her child, firmly supporting her belly with her arms, as if to anticipate the potential aggressions of the outside world. The home is adapted to become the nest that will welcome the newborn; in doing so, it ceases to be a functional dwelling and becomes a hearth, a place where life takes root. Pregnancy is further a renewed experience of time: it compels us to be patient. In a world of immediacy where everything is organised to satisfy the consumer wherever and whenever they wish, pregnancy introduces a radically different temporality: that of waiting, slowness, and maturation.

The Greek philosophers, like the Christian tradition, associated patience with the idea of suffering. Aristotle distinguished temperance, which pertains to pleasures, from patience, which relates to pain. To be patient is to know how to bear and endure hardship with resignation and firmness. But this patience is not passive resignation: it is lucidity in the face of trial, constancy, tenacity, perseverance. In biblical Hebrew, being patient is expressed as "having a long breath", as opposed to the impatient, who have a short breath. It is striking to observe that pregnancy contains this opposition almost literally: as the months pass, as the belly grows, the physical breath grows shorter. But more deeply, conception ruptures the routine of daily life by introducing a new breath of life: the long breath of waiting that anchors us in what is essential. When impatience prevents us from savouring the moment

by making us regret that the future has not yet arrived, pregnancy compels us to wait. This breath renders us fully present to the present.

The example of Job in the biblical tradition illuminates this dimension. This man of great virtue loses everything: his goods, his children, his health.

God tests his servant to

show that he remains faithful even in suffering. Job does not remain silent: the *Book of Job* exposes his despair, cries out his physical pain, his bitterness, his anguish. Patience is not stoic silence: it is faithfulness in trial, the lucidity that refuses resignation as much as blind revolt. And God ultimately rewards Job by restoring his goods twofold, by giving him seven more sons and three daughters, and by allowing him to live

If we no longer bring children into the world, we have no future. And if there is no tomorrow, there is no longer a today or a yesterday, for there will be no one left to receive what we have inherited from our forebears.

another hundred and forty years, seeing his family reach a fourth generation. The reward of patience lies in transmission, in the possibility of seeing one's descendants unfold across the generations.

Thus, conception inscribes us in our own genealogy: we learn that before us, our own parents were surprised by this life that is ours. One must wait until becoming a parent to remember what it was to be a child. And it is in becoming a parent that one truly takes one's place in the lineage: in becoming a mother, one becomes a daughter. One becomes aware, in one's ingratitude, of what one has received from one's parents. One comes to understand that one's parents did the best they could with what they had to give, working with their own history and their own intimate failings.

“OIKOPHILIA” AS A CIVILISATIONAL FOUNDATION

This gratitude towards our ancestors makes it possible to think of ourselves as inhabitants of the world; it has a name: it is what the British thinker Roger Scruton called “oikophilia”. This term, composed of the Greek *oikos* (hearth, home, household) and *philos* (love), literally means love of home. It stands in contrast to its antonym: *oikophobia*, which denotes self-hatred, repulsion towards one's own culture, tradition, and past, a phenomenon the philosopher considered characteristic of the contemporary Western intelligentsia.

The Greek word *oikos* appears in two terms familiar to us: economy and ecology. This kinship is not fortuitous. Economy is the management of the home (*oikos* + *nomos*, rule, law). Ecology is the study of the home (*oikos* + *logos*, science, reason). Both disciplines share the same anchorage in the notion of the home, that is, dwelling, inhabited space, the place where life is organised. These notions are of a functional, aesthetic, spiritual, and moral order.

Among the representations of home, tool, friend, hearth, music, painting, art, there are also included the noble, the majestic, the sacred; legality, courtesy, justice. Economy, cleanliness, the elementary rules of courtesy constitute the foundations of oikophilia. They attend to what is subjective, the way things seem to be and how they must harmonise, in favour of the good life. They make it possible to create a relationship between men and the objects of the world. These foundations of common life nourish our virtues and shape us as guardians of our common home.

It is no coincidence that the great ecological thought of the twentieth century, before it was confiscated by political ideology, was profoundly domestic; it thought of nature as a common home, not as a militant abstraction. Such is indeed the founding

narrative of European civilisation: Homer's *Odyssey*. Ulysses confronts every danger: the raging elements, the vengeful gods, death itself, to find his way home. The home is that externalised self, that place of shared destiny. The entire journey of Ulysses is animated by oikophilia: love of Ithaca, of Penelope, of Telemachus, of the land he has left and to which he longs to return. It is this love that gives him the strength to resist the Sirens, the enchantments of Circe, the promise of immortality offered by Calypso. Our civilisation is built upon the narrative of the quest for home understood as a return to one's origins.

But oikophilia is not passéist nostalgia or a timid retreat into an idealised past. This term refers precisely to a universal sentiment that manifests our attachment to our native land as to our childhood home. It expresses the feeling of being at home in the world, of belonging to a place, a history, a community. This is why, when we leave our home, we feel homesick. Oikophilia orients itself naturally towards history and the conservation of the past, not out of nostalgia, but out of a desire to live durably and consciously among things that endure. The spirit of conservation defends not the past as a commercialised heritage, but as a living heritage, something that endures because it lives in me. To exist fully in time is to understand, as Roger Scruton puts it admirably in *Green Philosophy*, that “the present moment is also the past, but the past of someone who has not yet existed. And time, lived in this way, connects us to the worlds before and after us. The time we aspire to and toward which we gravitate extends beyond this moment, this person, and this life.”

We must understand the home as the place where the earth and the dead are united with generations yet to come. It is not merely a geographical space but a temporal node, where past and future converge in the present. Those who have trodden this earth before us, and those who will tread it after us, between them we form the invisible yet essential link in the chain. Oikophilia is the awareness of this fragile bond.

THE HOMELAND AS A COMMUNITY OF DESTINY

What the pregnant woman experiences in her body, and the family within the home, Scruton describes at the scale of civilisation. Oikophilia, then, is not merely a private sentiment: it is also the affective foundation of all political life. Scruton describes it as a pre-political sentiment that allows one to feel that one inhabits the country in which one is born and lives. Loyalty to the home, to laws, to settlement and rootedness fosters this attachment to the homeland. This sentiment ultimately creates our intimate relationship with the nation we are building.

The homeland is not an ideological abstraction; it is a community of destiny that works for the future of its children, for the transmission of life and for the protection of those who carry it. It is the institutional and symbolic framework within which oikophilia can be exercised on a large scale: that of a people, a history, a civilisation. This is why the demographic question is inseparably a political question. When, in January 2024, Emmanuel Macron called for a “demographic rearmament,” certain feminists cried foul, while the President of the Republic proposed new arrangements for parental leave and announced a major plan against infertility. But is it not the role of a statesman to preserve and nurture the vital forces of the people who have brought him to power?

“Birth cannot be delegated; the patience of pregnancy cannot be optimised; the parent-child bond cannot be virtualised.”

The statesman's mission is to take charge of the life of the collective as a whole, for human life, like the destiny of nations, is perishable. His role is to protect this fragility. He must defend the heritage of his homeland, as well as the institutions of his country, so that the national home is preserved. Demography is not a secondary variable of politics: it is its fundamental horizon, for without a people there is neither nation nor politics possible.

Charles de Gaulle was well aware of this. He knew that the greatness of France and its continuity across the centuries depended above all on a strong birth rate: “Whatever way we organise our national work, our social relations, our political regime, our security itself, if it is established that the French people definitively fail to multiply, then France can be nothing but a fading light. But in this domain too, nothing is lost,

provided we know how to will it,” he proclaimed on 2 March 1945 before the Consultative Assembly.

In the aftermath of the Liberation, family policies reached their height. In 1945, the Provisional Government brought together all family associations within the *Union nationale des associations familiales* (Unaf). It created an Inter-ministerial Committee for Population and a High Council for Population and Family, whose opening sessions were presided over by the President of the Republic himself. In October of the same year, it established the *Sécurité sociale* and integrated the family allowance funds within it, while also creating the *Institut national d'études démographiques* (Ined). A comprehensive system supplemented by further measures, including maternal and infant protection services. In ten years, nine million children were born in France. The baby boom was not merely spontaneous; it was willed and sustained by a clear political determination, even if it proved only a post-war parenthesis in the history of modernity.

The example of Israel is, in this domain, particularly instructive. Its fertility rate stood at three children per woman in 2021, and the Jewish state stands as an exception among OECD members: in 2020, Israel led with 2.90 children per woman, followed by Mexico (2.08) and France (1.79). And although women's education and integration into society continue to advance, the birth rate shows no sign of declining: 71% of secular Jewish women declare a desire for three children or more.

How can such figures be explained? One must return to the founding of the State of Israel. Its founder, David Ben Gurion, quickly realised that Jewish immigration alone would not be enough to win the demographic contest. As early as 1943, he admonished the Jews of Palestine for their low fertility and urged Jewish women to bring at least four children into the world. Six years later, he created the Ben Gurion Prize, which rewarded each “heroic mother” upon the birth of her tenth child. In 1962, a committee on population issues was established, and the Israeli government introduced a new pro-natalist policy to remove the socio-economic obstacles to the fulfilment of families' aspirations. These family policies favoured large families from the fifth child onwards. Alongside this, a major plan to combat infertility was launched.

But more than anything, the fertility of Israel is a state of mind shaped by the history and culture of their country. Israel is fighting for its survival: the traumatic legacy of the Shoah and the geopolitical position of the Jewish state foster the vital imperative of securing its descendants. The Israeli lesson is political, but it is also philosophical. It shows that natality is not a matter of biology or economics; it is a matter of meaning. Israelis have children because they feel they are fighting for something, because they belong

to a community of destiny that precedes and exceeds them. This is oikophilia at the scale of a nation. This is why we too must understand that we are fighting for our survival.

Two records broken in 2024 confirm this for France: 663,000 babies were born, the lowest figure since 1945, while 336,700 initial residence permits were issued, the highest figure since 1945. Birth rates are falling and immigration is rising. This twofold statistical reality is not merely demographic; it is civilisational. A homeland is a living body that works for the future of its children, for the transmission of life and for the protection of those who carry it. When this community ceases to reproduce, it is its identity and its collective project that are threatened.

To give young people the desire to continue the adventure of the generations, we must, collectively, defend deep rootedness, which takes root in the home and comes to fruition in the City. Oikophilia is the only resource we have for maintaining the local order in the face of the global decline driven by globalisation.

NATALITY AS THE CENTRAL CATEGORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

As we have seen, the decline in birth rates is not merely an economic phenomenon. It reveals above all a moral and cultural reversal. Material support for families is indispensable, but we must also restore meaning to commitment, give value to the bearing of children, and recall the beauty of transmission.

Thus, to respond to the civilisational challenge confronting the Western world, we must now interrogate birth as the keystone of all political thought. The German-born Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt, refugee in the United States after fleeing Nazism, was the first to undertake this approach.

For all Western philosophy before her, from Plato to Heidegger through Spinoza and Hegel, death constitutes the fundamental horizon of the human condition. For the consciousness of death opens man to transcendence, to temporality, to authentic existence. Arendt effects a radical reversal. Whereas the confrontation of human beings with the prospect of their own death had until then constituted the central horizon of all philosophical reflection, she makes natality the central category of political thought. Birth, she says, is a promise of renewal and the primary condition of freedom.

She becomes aware of this in a remarkable way during a journey through Europe in 1952, when she stays in Munich. She attends a performance of Handel's oratorio, *The Messiah*. She writes shortly afterwards: "The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, 'natural' ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is



Photo by Nathan Dumlaio on Unsplash

ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born." Birth is not the mere cyclical repetition of life, by which one member of the species replaces another. The child is welcomed as a newcomer, endowed with a proper name, promised a singular history. Birth is the event that makes all events possible: it renders all adventures possible. The child looks at things with fresh eyes; he can reinvent them and act accordingly. He is the one who marvels at a dead leaf fallen from a tree, who fixes his gaze on

his parents could never have imagined. He is not wearied by existence; he marvels at the mystery of the world. He inhabits the earth and makes it his terrain of exploration. This renewed gaze upon the world transforms that of the parents, who are compelled to let go of their received ideas. And sometimes, it even restores their sight.

One must not be mistaken, however. This renewal does not make a clean sweep of the past. On the contrary, it is in transmitting what one has received that one preserves and allows to emerge what is new and

“Without future generations, there is no one left to care for the planet.

the daisy that has sprung up among the weeds, who invents new signifiers by making language his own.

This thought of natality is a powerful philosophical antidote to contemporary antinatalist ideology. Where the proponents of political ecology see in each birth an additional burden weighing on the planet's resources, Arendt sees in each birth a miracle. Where No Kids activists advocate closure upon the present, Arendt affirms that it is natality which opens history to the unpredictable, to hope, to transformation. Birth is the condition of all renewal.

Arendtian thought here joins the Christian tradition, which she cites explicitly in a famous passage from *The Human Condition*: "It is this hope and faith in the world that found perhaps its most glorious and most succinct expression in the few words with which the Gospels announced their 'glad tidings': A child has been born unto us." Natality as a political category is not a mere biologicistic affirmation: it is the recognition that the future remains always open, that history is never closed, that each birth is a new chance for the world.

How starkly Arendt's thought contradicts the ideology of political ecology! The latter presupposes that the future is closed, that resources are finite, that each additional human being inexorably worsens the situation. Arendt, on the contrary, affirms that it is precisely in the novelty of each birth that the possibility of a creative solution to seemingly insoluble problems resides. Today's children will perhaps invent the answers to tomorrow's ecological challenges, provided they are given the chance to be born and to act.

This vision calls for conceiving the child as a genuine actor of the future. For the child is one who looks at the world with fresh eyes, who asks questions that adults have ceased to ask, who invents solutions that

revolutionary in each child. For nothing is built on ruins. The child is the link between what we were, what we are, and what we shall be.

Transmission is not repetition, but creativity with fidelity, the capacity to be both heir and inventor. It is indeed remarkable to observe that the great civilisations have always placed natality at the heart of their collective project. Hebrew civilisation, of which we have spoken, sees in fertility a divine blessing and in transmission a sacred obligation. Chinese civilisation, despite the vicissitudes we have evoked, has always placed filial piety and the care of ancestors as cardinal values. Christian civilisation has made the mystery of the Nativity the heart of its liturgical calendar, and the welcoming of the child one of its fundamental commandments.

The contemporary Western world, victim of oikophobia, is in the process of losing this capacity. Political ecology is, in this context, less an environmental theory than a cultural symptom: the symptom of a civilisation that has lost the desire to perpetuate itself because it no longer knows who it is. Worse still, it no longer knows where it dwells.

ACTING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

If Arendt furnishes us with a philosophy of natality, her friend Hans Jonas furnishes us with an ethics of responsibility towards future generations. The German philosopher is the author of *The Imperative of Responsibility*, published in 1979, one of the founding texts of environmental ethics.

Faced with the threat that modern technology poses to life on Earth, Jonas formulates a new imperative: "Act so that the effects of your action are compatible

with the permanence of genuine human life on Earth.” This imperative is remarkable on several counts. First, it introduces a temporal dimension that traditional ethics ignored: responsibility towards future generations, towards beings not yet born who, by definition, cannot participate in present deliberations. Second, it specifies that what must be preserved is not simply biological life, but a genuinely human life, a life that is dignified, free, fulfilled, inscribed in a history and a culture, in which man can develop in all his dimensions.

This is where Jonas distinguishes himself radically from political ecology, by which he was often exploited

who claim to save the planet by not having children commit a fundamental paralogism: they destroy the agent of responsibility in the name of responsibility itself. Without future generations, there is no one left to care for the planet. The disappearance of humanity is not an ecological solution; it is the suppression of the ecological question itself.

Jonasian ethics is therefore, in its very principle, profoundly natalist, even if Jonas himself did not draw all the consequences of this principle in his reflection on demography. It affirms that responsibility towards the future passes through transmission, and that



Photo by Juliane Liebermann on Unsplash

and distorted. It is because human life has an incommensurable value that it deserves to be transmitted, protected, and perpetuated. And it is precisely because it might cease to be that we must act to preserve it. If this formulation might seem tautological, it comes in reality to reaffirm the very value of life, which resides in its vulnerability, and therefore in the necessity of protecting it.

To oppose the renewal of generations is therefore to render void the very possibility of caring for one's environment and for all human life. No Kids activists

transmission is impossible without natality. Authentic ecology does not oppose demography; it requires it, making its own the words of *Genesis*: “Be fruitful, and multiply.”

Faced with the challenges that seem today insurmountable: climate disruption, extinction of biodiversity, exhaustion of resources, geopolitical conflicts, it may be tempting to abdicate: to choose the defeatist path of No Kids, or the inconsequence of the *childfree*, the better to praise chimerical degrowth or wallow in the pleasures of consumption.

But is it still possible to believe that consciences can rise to prevent this destructive headlong rush? The answer is yes, provided we understand that responsibility is not primarily an abstract obligation, but a concrete experience rooted in our relationship with others. The word “responsible” derives from the Latin *respondere*, “to answer,” itself from *spondere*, “to promise,” whose meaning is twofold: one is responsible who carries out the actions to which one has committed and for which one is able to answer. We must therefore both attend to the effects of our action and perpetuate the cycle of life by awakening children to the responsibility they carry within them. For children are human beings in potentia. Each must become aware of his power, and of its effects, in order to renounce his omnipotence. The fear aroused by the climate crisis must provoke in us a resolve to act to prevent catastrophe. It is by educating our children in small gestures, in attentiveness, in delicacy, that we educate ourselves.

In perpetuating life, in extending it, and in watching over it, each person can embrace the full extent of his responsibility and dignity. Human dignity does not consist in reducing one's footprint on the world, but in assuming one's place fully in time, between the generations that have preceded and those that will come.

At a time when artificial intelligence is reshaping our ways of knowing, communicating, and learning, the temptation is great to believe that transmission can be entrusted to machines. They accumulate, classify, and restore, sometimes with a precision that surpasses that of human beings. But something escapes them irremediably: presence. For to transmit is not merely to transfer information or knowledge. It is to pass on, from one being to another, a sensibility, a way of looking at the world, a manner of inhabiting time. This requires a body, a voice, a gaze, a Face. It requires an adult to stand before a child and say: here is what I received, here is what I made of it, here is what I give to you. No algorithm can perform that gesture.

The growing digitalisation of our existences makes this challenge more difficult, but also more necessary than ever. By ushering humanity into an era of relationship with machines, it risks substituting for the living bond between generations a cold dependency on interfaces. Yet rootedness and oikophilia rest precisely upon the irreducibility of human experience. Birth cannot be delegated; the patience of pregnancy cannot be optimised; the parent-child bond cannot be virtualised. It is more necessary than ever to remain

transmitters, to hold ourselves in the long time of the generations.

Defending this conviction requires resisting the sirens of ideology: all the discourses that promise to save the planet by destroying humanity, that claim to liberate women by depriving them of motherhood, that wish to reduce the human footprint instead of elevating the human conscience. It also requires trusting women in their desire for children, by offering them the best conditions in which to welcome them, and trusting men by protecting the role of father and by favouring political support for families.

But it is a profound cultural revolution that is required. The ecology of civilisations that we are defending is an ecology of beauty: it understands that the love of nature, to be lasting, must pass through contemplation, wonder, and aesthetic feeling. A child who has never walked in a forest, watched the stars, or listened to birdsong will not become an adult who cares for the environment. Education in the beautiful is the condition of education in the good. It is also an ecology of freedom: it refuses to reduce man to a variable in an environmental calculation and affirms that the

freedom to bring children into the world, to raise them, to transmit a culture, cannot be sacrificed in the name of any ideology, whatever virtuous garments it wears. It is in assuming one's condition as heir and transmitter that man exercises his freedom to the full.

The stakes are not merely the biological survival of the species: they are the survival of a way of being in the world that recognises in each birth a miracle and in each act of transmission an act of freedom. The ecology of civilisations does not contemplate the past with nostalgia; it believes in the necessity of making it a gift to the future.

Albert Camus's words have never seemed so timely: “*Each generation doubtless feels called upon to reform the world. Mine knows that it will not reform it, but its task is perhaps even greater. It consists in preventing the world from destroying itself.*”

The future is watching us. ▀



Aziliz Le Corre

Editor-in-Chief, Opinions section,
at “Le Journal du Dimanche” and essayist

Each generation doubtless feels called upon to reform the world. Mine knows that it will not reform it, but its task is perhaps even greater. It consists in preventing the world from destroying itself.



FOOD ECOLOGY

Reconciling Environmental Sustainability, Food Security and Agricultural Competitiveness in Europe

Cristina Tinelli

Over the past decade, the concept of food ecology has moved from academic debate into the centre of European policymaking. Growing concerns about climate change, biodiversity loss, resource scarcity, public health and geopolitical instability have highlighted the need to rethink how food is produced, distributed and consumed. At the same time, recent crises—including the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and increasing disruptions to global supply chains—have demonstrated the strategic importance of resilient food systems capable of guaranteeing food security under increasingly uncertain conditions. Food ecology provides a useful framework to address these challenges because it considers food

systems as interconnected networks involving agriculture, natural resources, economic activities, social dynamics and public health. Rather than focusing exclusively on agricultural production, it analyses the relationships between farmers, consumers, ecosystems, markets and institutions. In doing so, it seeks to identify solutions that promote sustainability while ensuring that food remains available, affordable and

safe. The European Union has progressively incorporated many of these principles into its policy agenda. Initiatives such as the Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy aim to accelerate the transition towards more sustainable food systems. However, the implementation of these policies has also generated significant debate among agricultural stakeholders. Farmers' organisations, have repeatedly

stressed that environmental objectives must be balanced with economic sustainability and food production capacity, alongside that of social sustainability and rural vitality. According to these organisations, sustainability cannot be achieved if farmers are unable to maintain viable businesses or if Europe becomes increasingly dependent on food imports from third countries operating

Food ecology provides a useful framework to address these challenges because it considers food systems as interconnected networks involving agriculture, natural resources, economic activities, social dynamics and public health.

under different standards under the auspices of free trade. Especially in these moments of uncertainty we understood the importance of having a EU solid food production system.

The challenge facing Europe is therefore not whether food systems should become more sustainable, but rather how this transition can be achieved without undermining agricultural competitiveness,

food production and security and rural development. In this context, food ecology should not be understood as a strategy aimed at reducing agricultural production. Instead, it should be viewed as an integrated approach capable of combining environmental protection, economic growth, technological innovation and social cohesion. However, it must be clear that all of these must be brought together equally, and to have uneven approaches must be explained. This article examines the concept of food ecology through the lens of European agriculture and food policy. It explores the environmental, economic and social dimensions of food systems, analyses the role of farmers in the ecological transition and discusses how innovation and public policies can contribute to building a more sustainable and resilient future for European agriculture.

The Evolution of Food Systems FROM FOOD SECURITY TO FOOD ECOLOGY

The development of modern food systems in Europe has been closely linked to the continent's political, economic and social evolution. Following the Second World War, one of the primary objectives of European governments was to ensure food security for a population that had experienced widespread shortages and instability. Increasing agricultural productivity became a strategic priority, leading to major investments in mechanisation, technological innovation and rural infrastructure.

The establishment of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 1962 represented a decisive step in this process. The CAP was designed by the EU Treaty to increase agricultural productivity, stabilise markets, guarantee a fair standard of living for farmers and ensure a stable supply of food at reasonable prices for consumers. For several decades, this policy contributed significantly to transforming Europe from a region concerned about food shortages into one of the world's leading agricultural producers. The success of these policies was accompanied by profound structural changes. Agricultural production became increasingly specialised, region specific and integrated into global markets. Technological advancements allowed farmers to increase yields while reducing labour requirements. International trade expanded rapidly, creating new opportunities for exports and economic growth. Consumers also benefited from greater food availability, lower prices and a wider variety of products unlike ever before. However, the intensive development of agricultural production also generated new challenges. Over the decades, scientific research began to highlight the environmental consequences associated with certain farming practices, such as soil degradation, water pollution, biodiversity loss and greenhouse

“ Without agriculture rural areas will be abandoned that's a fact.”

gas emissions. Growing public awareness of these issues led policymakers, researchers and civil society organisations to question whether food systems should be evaluated solely on the basis of productivity and economic efficiency.

At the same time, the concept of sustainability gained increasing prominence at both national and international levels. The emergence of global environmental concerns, particularly climate change, encouraged a broader understanding of the relationship between agriculture and natural resources. Food production was no longer viewed exclusively as an economic activity but also as a key component of environmental stewardship and social development. The concept of public goods became more developed in this area in the format of the presence of healthy natural areas, and rural vitality became intrinsically linked to what could be considered the correct type of agricultural production. It is within this context that the concept of food ecology emerged. Unlike traditional approaches focused primarily on agricultural output, food ecology adopts a systemic perspective. It recognises that food systems influence—and are influenced by—a wide range of factors including climate, biodiversity, public health, rural economies, consumer behaviour and international trade.

The transition from food security to food ecology does not imply abandoning the objective of ensuring sufficient food production. On the contrary, it reflects an effort to reconcile production goals with broader sustainability objectives. Modern food systems must simultaneously provide adequate food supplies, support farmers' livelihoods, protect natural resources and contribute to economic development. This balance has become increasingly important in recent years. Climate-related events, geopolitical tensions and market disruptions have demonstrated that food security remains a fundamental concern. At the same time, societal expectations regarding environmental protection and animal welfare continue to grow. As a result, contemporary agricultural policies are increasingly expected to address multiple objectives simultaneously.

Food ecology therefore represents the next stage in the evolution of food systems. It seeks to move beyond the traditional opposition between productivity and sustainability by promoting integrated solutions capable of delivering economic, environmental and social benefits. For European agriculture, this means embracing innovation, improving resource efficiency and strengthening resilience while continuing to guarantee food security and competitiveness in a rapidly changing global environment.

A SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO FOOD SYSTEMS

Food ecology is often described as a holistic approach to understanding food systems. Rather than analysing agriculture, nutrition, environmental protection or economic development separately, it examines the interactions between these different dimensions and seeks to identify solutions capable of generating positive outcomes across multiple sectors. At its core, food ecology recognises that food systems operate within complex ecological, economic and social environments. Agricultural production depends on natural resources such as soil, water, biodiversity and climate stability. At the same time, farming activities influence these resources through land use, resource consumption and environmental management practices. Food systems also shape rural economies, employment opportunities, public health outcomes and patterns of international trade. Without agriculture rural areas will be abandoned that's a fact. This interconnected nature means that decisions taken in one area frequently generate consequences in another. Policies designed to reduce environmental impacts, for example, may affect agricultural productivity or production costs. Similarly, efforts to maximise yields without considering environmental consequences may undermine the long-term sustainability of natural resources upon which agriculture itself depends. Farmers are extremely aware of this and are, therefore, those who engage first in protecting nature resources. Food ecology therefore seeks to overcome fragmented policymaking by encouraging integrated approaches capable of balancing multiple objectives simultaneously. Sustainability within food systems is often described through three complementary pillars: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and social sustainability, as mentioned above.

Environmental sustainability focuses on managing and supporting natural resources and ecosystem functions. This includes reducing greenhouse gas emissions, protecting biodiversity, improving water management and improving soil health. These objectives are essential not only for environmental reasons but also because agriculture ultimately depends on

healthy ecosystems to remain productive.

Economic sustainability concerns the viability of agricultural enterprises and rural economies. Farmers must generate sufficient income to invest, innovate and continue producing food. The famous adage, you cannot go green if you are in the red, confirms the necessity for financial viability is the foundation of sustainability pillars. Without economic sustainability, environmental ambitions risk becoming politically and practically unattainable. Social sustainability includes food accessibility, public health, employment opportunities and rural development. Food systems should contribute to social cohesion by ensuring that consumers have access to affordable and nutritious food while supporting vibrant rural communities. Agriculture also provides jobs and stability in these areas.

A central principle of food ecology is that these three pillars cannot be treated independently. Long-term environmental sustainability requires economically viable farms. Economic viability depends upon healthy natural resources. Social stability relies upon both food security and prosperous rural territories. Successful food policies must therefore address all dimensions simultaneously. Innovation is key. This systemic perspective has become increasingly relevant as policymakers confront multiple crises occurring at the same time. Climate change, geopolitical tensions, demographic shifts and changing consumer expectations are creating pressures that cannot be addressed through isolated policy interventions. Food ecology offers a framework capable of understanding these challenges as interconnected components of a broader system. For European agriculture, this approach suggests that the future lies not in choosing between production and sustainability but in finding innovative ways to strengthen both. It is precisely this balance that many agricultural organisations advocate when discussing the future of European food systems.

The Environmental challenge AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Environmental sustainability occupies a central place within the concept of food ecology. Agriculture depends directly upon natural resources and ecosystem services, making environmental protection not only an ecological necessity but also an economic imperative for the future of food production.

Climate change represents perhaps the most significant environmental challenge facing global agriculture. Rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns and increasing frequencies of extreme weather events are already affecting agricultural production across Europe. Droughts have become more frequent in Southern Europe and even Northern Countries are

starting to have droughts, while floods and storms have generated significant losses. These developments highlight the vulnerability of food systems to climate instability. Agriculture at the same time contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and contributes to climate mitigation through some practices such as regenerative agriculture and carbon sinking. This dual relationship places agriculture in a unique position: it is both affected by climate change and contribute to climate mitigation efforts. European farmers are already operating under some of the world's highest environmental standards. Additional requirements should therefore be accompanied by adequate support mechanisms, realistic transition periods and investments in innovation. The objective should not be to reduce European agricultural production but rather to improve its environmental performance. Biodiversity constitutes another critical dimension of food ecology. Agricultural landscapes host a wide variety of species that contribute to ecosystem functioning. Pollinators, soil organisms and natural pest predators provide essential services that support agricultural productivity. The decline of biodiversity can therefore generate direct economic consequences for food production. Protecting biodiversity requires a combination of approaches, including habitat conservation, sustainable land management and the adoption of farming practices that enhance ecosystem resilience. Many farmers already play a key role as environmental stewards, managing large portions of Europe's territory and contributing to landscape preservation.

Water management is equally important. Agriculture remains one of the largest users of freshwater resources worldwide. Increasing water scarcity in several European regions has intensified discussions regarding irrigation efficiency and resource management. Innovative technologies, including precision irrigation systems and digital monitoring tools, offer opportunities to improve water use efficiency while maintaining productivity. Soil health represents another fundamental component of sustainable food systems. Healthy soils support agricultural production, store carbon, regulate water cycles and contribute to biodiversity conservation. Yet soil degradation, erosion and loss of organic matter continue to threaten agricultural productivity in many regions. That's the reason why many farmers are embracing preservative agriculture. Food ecology therefore emphasises the need to manage natural resources in ways that maintain their productive capacity over the long term. This does not necessarily imply reducing production levels. Instead, it encourages investments in innovation, technology and knowledge transfer that allow farmers to produce more efficiently while reducing environmental impacts. In this regard, the environmental dimension of food ecology should be understood not

as a constraint imposed upon agriculture but as an opportunity to strengthen the resilience and sustainability of food systems. The challenge lies in ensuring that environmental objectives remain compatible with food security, economic viability and the competitiveness of European agriculture. ***Farmers are not the problem but part of the solution.***

FOOD SECURITY IN AN ERA OF GEOPOLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

For many years, food security was often taken for granted within Europe. The success of the Common Agricultural Policy, advances in agricultural productivity and the expansion of international trade created the impression that food availability was no longer a major strategic concern. Recent events have demonstrated the opposite. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities within global supply chains and highlighted the importance of maintaining resilient food production systems. Shortly afterwards, Russia's invasion of Ukraine generated severe disruptions in global agricultural markets. Ukraine and Russia are among the world's largest exporters of cereals, oilseeds and fertilisers. The conflict affected international trade flows, increased production costs and contributed to food price volatility across global markets. These developments have reinforced awareness that food security remains a strategic issue. In a context characterised by geopolitical tensions, climate uncertainty and increasing competition for resources, maintaining domestic food production capacity has become an essential policy objective. Food ecology therefore cannot be reduced exclusively to environmental considerations. Sustainable food systems must also remain productive and resilient. A food system that significantly reduces domestic production while increasing dependence on imports may achieve certain environmental targets on paper while simultaneously creating new strategic vulnerabilities. This concern is frequently raised by European farmers' organisations. We argue that sustainability policies should not result in carbon leakage or production leakage, whereby agricultural production is displaced outside Europe to countries operating under less stringent environmental, labour or animal welfare standards. Such an outcome could undermine both European farmers and global sustainability objectives. Some EU policies in the past failed to create an environmental dumping leaving Europe to produce less and letting Third Countries to produce more without respecting high environmental standards. The concept of strategic autonomy has increasingly entered discussions surrounding agriculture and food policy. While complete self-sufficiency is neither realistic nor desirable, Europe must preserve sufficient productive capacity to guarantee food

availability especially during periods of crisis. The ability to produce food should be regarded as a strategic asset comparable to energy security or defence capabilities. Food security is national security. These conflicts and crises continue in the wake of the invasion of Iran, which further stressed supply lines for critical resources used in the production of food. As a result, food security became ever closer related to resource security, and self-sufficiency wherein the essential inputs for food production such as fertilisers needing to be sourced closer to home, and from more accessible routes. Many options for this particular example include aspects related to livestock manure management,

reconstitution, and transportation to different regions where there is a lack of livestock production. Bioeconomy solutions have existed for decades, but it is now in the wake of a crisis that these solutions become viable and mainstreamable. Food ecology therefore requires balancing environmental ambitions with food security considerations. Long-term sustainability depends not only on protecting ecosystems but also on ensuring that societies can reliably access sufficient quantities of safe and affordable food. This balance will become increasingly important as global population growth, climate pressures and geopolitical competition continue to reshape international food systems.

According to these organisations, sustainability cannot be achieved if farmers are unable to maintain viable businesses or if Europe becomes increasingly dependent on food imports from third countries operating under different standards under the auspices of free trade.



Photo by Tom De Decker on Unsplash

Farmers' Perspective ENSURING A FAIR AND VIABLE TRANSITION, FARMERS AS PART OF THE SOLUTION

While discussions surrounding food ecology often focus on environmental targets, climate objectives and consumer expectations, the success of any transition ultimately depends on the people responsible for producing food. Farmers occupy a unique position within the food system: they are both economic actors and environmental managers, responsible for maintaining productive agricultural land while adapting to increasingly ambitious sustainability requirements. For this reason, many agricultural organisations have consistently argued that farmers must be placed at the centre of the ecological transition rather than being treated as passive recipients of regulatory obligations. The long-term sustainability of European food systems depends on the ability of farmers to remain economically viable, technologically innovative and socially resilient.

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AS THE FOUNDATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

European farmers operate in a highly competitive global market while simultaneously complying with some of the highest environmental, sanitary and animal welfare standards in the world.

Over recent years, agricultural producers have faced increasing pressures linked to rising production costs, volatile commodity prices, energy market disruptions, labour shortages and extreme weather events. At the same time, they have been required to invest in new technologies, improve environmental performance and adapt to evolving regulatory frameworks. These challenges highlight an essential principle: sustainability must be financially sustainable. Farmers cannot be expected to implement new environmental practices if they lack the economic resources necessary to support such investments. This concern became particularly visible during the debates surrounding the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy. While agricultural organisations broadly support the objective of improving sustainability, they have repeatedly called for realistic implementation pathways supported by comprehensive impact assessments. Reaching the same goals with different paths. Their concern is not the environmental ambition itself, but rather the risk that rapid regulatory changes could undermine farm profitability and accelerate the decline of agricultural production within Europe.



Photo by Yang on Unsplash

THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY AS A STRATEGIC INSTRUMENT

The Common Agricultural Policy remains the most important European instrument for supporting farmers during the ecological transition. As underlined, since its creation in 1962, the CAP has evolved significantly, moving from a policy primarily focused on increasing production towards a framework that increasingly incorporates environmental and climate objectives. Farmers' organisations generally support the idea that the CAP should contribute to sustainability goals while continuing to fulfil its original mission of guaranteeing food security and supporting farm incomes. This is based off the original social contract that was developed in the 1960s, which created supports for farmers in exchange for high quality, affordable food in Europe, and as such according to agricultural stakeholders, the CAP should remain a strong and adequately funded policy capable of ensuring stability in a sector exposed to significant market and climatic risks. One of the main concerns expressed by farmers' organisations is the growing complexity of the CAP. Successive reforms have introduced increasingly sophisticated environmental requirements, reporting obligations and administrative procedures. While many of these measures pursue legitimate objectives, excessive bureaucracy can create significant burdens, particularly for small and medium-sized farms. Agricultural organisations therefore advocate a CAP that remains ambitious but also practical and accessible. Simplification, administrative efficiency and flexibility are frequently identified as priorities for future reforms. Another important issue concerns the future budget of the CAP. Farmers' representatives have repeatedly argued that new environmental and climate obligations cannot be implemented effectively if financial resources continue to decline in real terms. In their view, a strong CAP budget is essential not only for supporting agricultural incomes but also for financing the transition towards more sustainable farming systems. Farmers need incentives as to produce affordable food and as to invest in innovative food productive systems and those innovation has a cost.

Farm to Fork THE GREEN DREAM

The Farm to Fork Strategy represents one of the flagship initiatives of the European Green Deal. Its objective is to accelerate the transition towards a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system by addressing the entire food chain, from agricultural production to consumer behaviour.

Many of the objectives contained within the strategy are broadly supported by the agricultural sector. These include reducing food waste, improving

“Farmers are not simply subjects of this transition; they are among its most important actors.”

resource efficiency, promoting sustainable consumption and strengthening the resilience of food systems. However, farmers have also expressed concerns regarding certain quantitative targets included in the strategy. Among the most debated measures were proposals to significantly reduce pesticide use, fertiliser use and agricultural inputs while expanding organic farming. The principal concern was not opposition to sustainability itself but uncertainty regarding the cumulative impact of multiple regulatory targets on agricultural productivity. Many farming and food producing organisations argued that achieving these objectives without sufficient technological alternatives could reduce production levels, increase production costs and weaken the competitiveness of European agriculture. Several studies cited during policy debates suggested that substantial reductions in agricultural output could occur if ambitious environmental targets were implemented without adequate innovation, investment and transition mechanisms. Farmers therefore called for comprehensive scientific assessments evaluating both environmental benefits and economic consequences. From this perspective, sustainability objectives should be accompanied by realistic implementation strategies that maintain Europe's capacity to produce food while improving environmental performance.

From the Green Deal to the Competitiveness Compass and the Vision for agriculture A NEW APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY

The political debate surrounding European agriculture has evolved significantly since the election of the new European Parliament and the new European Commission in 2024. Many stakeholders within the agricultural sector have argued that the initial

implementation of the European Green Deal underestimated a fundamental dimension of sustainability: competitiveness. While the environmental ambitions of the Green Deal were broadly recognised, farmers' organisations repeatedly warned that environmental objectives could not be pursued independently from economic realities. In this context, the publication of the Competitiveness Compass marked an important shift in the European Commission's approach. Rather than abandoning climate and environmental objectives, the new strategy acknowledges that these goals must be achieved through more pragmatic and economically sustainable pathways. *Same goals different paths*. This evolution reflects a principle that agricultural organisations have consistently defended: there can be no environmental sustainability without economic sustainability. Farmers cannot be expected to invest in greener production methods if their businesses are no longer economically viable. The Competitiveness Compass also recognises that transitions require time, investment and political support. Structural changes cannot be imposed overnight but must be gradual, predictable and accompanied by adequate policy instruments. A similar message can be found in the Vision for Agriculture and Food presented by Commissioner Christophe Hansen. *The Vision* acknowledges that certain elements of previous policies require adaptation in order to better balance environmental objectives with food production, competitiveness and rural development.

One of the most notable examples concerns the livestock sector. During the early stages of the Green Deal debate, livestock farming was often portrayed primarily as a source of environmental pressure. The new policy discourse adopts a more balanced perspective, recognising that sustainable livestock production can play an important role within European food systems. Rather than reducing livestock production as an objective in itself, the focus is increasingly shifting towards improving sustainability through innovation, better management practices and technological progress.

The recent simplification of several Common Agricultural Policy requirements has also been welcomed by farmers' organisations. Revisions to Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs) have reduced administrative burdens while preserving environmental objectives. According to many stakeholders, these adjustments demonstrate that environmental protection and food production do not need to be in conflict. Simplification can improve both policy effectiveness and farm competitiveness. Another important aspect of *the Vision* concerns the principle of reciprocity in international trade. European farmers are increasingly concerned about the risk of being subject to stringent production standards while competing against imports produced under less demanding environmental, animal welfare and labor conditions. This debate has become particularly visible in discussions surrounding the EU-Mercosur agreement. Farmers' organisations across Europe have argued that trade liberalisation should not create situations in which European producers are placed at a competitive disadvantage because they comply with higher standards. In their view, such asymmetries amount to environmental and social dumping, whereby production is effectively outsourced to regions operating under lower regulatory requirements. Recent food safety concerns have further

strengthened these arguments. Cases involving imports from South America of meat products containing substances prohibited within the European Union have raised questions regarding the consistency of European trade and food policies. For many farmers, these episodes illustrate the need for stronger enforcement of reciprocity principles and more effective controls on imported products. *The Vision for Agriculture and Food* also introduces important reflections regarding plant protection products. The Commission's recent proposals aimed at simplifying approval procedures and facilitating access to innovative crop protection tools represent a significant departure from the previous Sustainable Use Regulation (SUR) proposal. The SUR, promoted under the first Von der Leyen Commission, envisaged a 50% reduction in the use of plant protection products across the European Union. While farmers support the objective of reducing risks associated with crop protection products, many stakeholders argued that quantitative reduction targets alone failed to take sufficient account of agronomic realities, regional differences and the availability of alternative solutions. The current approach places greater emphasis on innovation, risk-based assessments and access to new technologies, reflecting a broader shift towards achieving sustainability objectives through technological progress rather than through restrictions alone. Taken together, these developments suggest that European agricultural policy is entering a new phase. Environmental sustainability remains a central objective, but it is increasingly being integrated with concerns related to competitiveness, food security, technological innovation and the long-term viability of farming communities. This more balanced approach is widely viewed by the agricultural sector as a necessary condition for building truly sustainable food systems in Europe. A last element farmers are waiting for is the approval of the regulation of New breeding techniques that will allow to produce without using input and protecting yields at the same time.

LESSONS LEARNED

The debate surrounding food ecology highlights the importance of partnership. The ecological transition cannot be imposed successfully through regulation alone. It requires cooperation between policymakers, researchers, consumers and farmers.

The future of European agriculture depends upon achieving a balanced approach that combines environmental ambition with economic realism. Farmers must remain competitive, rural communities must remain vibrant and Europe must continue to guarantee food security for its citizens.

Food ecology therefore requires more than environmental objectives. It requires policies capable of reconciling sustainability, productivity and competitiveness within a coherent and long-term vision for European agriculture. Farmers are not simply subjects of this transition; they are among its most important actors.

WHAT'S NEXT

The future Common Agricultural Policy for the 2028–2034 period should reconcile environmental sustainability, food security, competitiveness and rural development. However, the European Commission's proposals of July 2025 have raised significant concerns within the agricultural sector. The reduction of CAP funding in real terms, combined with the increasing integration of agricultural expenditure into broader national planning frameworks, has fuelled fears of a gradual renationalisation of what has historically

Whether Europe is willing to equip its farmers with the resources necessary to meet rising expectations, or whether it risks weakening one of the foundations of its economic resilience, territorial cohesion and food sovereignty.

been the European Union's most integrated and strategic policy. Ultimately, this debate goes far beyond agricultural funding and reflects a broader question about the place of agriculture within the European project. If the European Union genuinely considers food security, environmental sustainability and strategic autonomy to be priorities, then agriculture must be recognized as a strategic

sector and supported accordingly. At a time of growing geopolitical uncertainty and increasing challenges to global food security, the proposed reforms have reopened a fundamental discussion: whether Europe is willing to equip its farmers with the resources necessary to meet rising expectations, or whether it risks weakening one of the foundations of its economic resilience, territorial cohesion and food sovereignty. ▀



Cristina Tinelli
Director of International and
EU affairs – Confagricoltura



Towards a New Relationship between HUMANITY, NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY

Guerino Nuccio Bovalino

ORPHEUS AND BENEDICT XVI. AT THE ROOTS OF THE ECOLOGY OF MAN

The crisis of our age is not merely ecological or technological; it is, more fundamentally, a crisis in humanity's relationship with limits, the body, memory, and mystery. "Prometheus is a creator who looks ahead; Orpheus looks back and returns, he restores, he is imbued with nostalgia and resolves not to lose anything". According to Alain Finkelkraut, the crisis of the West lies in its obsessive attachment to the Promethean ideal, which leaves it unable to resist the relentless pull of the future. For Finkelkraut, our gaze must instead turn toward another figure of myth: For the philosopher, we must turn our

Orpheus is the myth of prudence, of 'phronesis', a virtue that signifies an awareness of the tragic human condition and recognises the value of limits.

attention to another icon of mythological thought: Orpheus. Through his song, he takes responsibility for Eurydice's disappearance, mourns her absence, and preserves her essence; Prometheus, on the other hand, represents the radical rejection of the fatality inherent in existence. Orpheus is the myth of those who, by criti-

cising the untouchable nature of progressive hysteria and Dionysian nihilism, reconcile themselves with the mysterious aspect of life; with the inevitability of death; with the wisdom of nature, which serves to counter the mysticism of artificiality; with tradition and the religious sense of existence. Orpheus is the

myth of prudence, of 'phronesis', a virtue that signifies an awareness of the tragic human condition and recognises the value of limits. Like the myth of Icarus, the story of Orpheus invites us to recover the tragic sentiment of acceptance of finitude and fragility, fundamental truths that restore our courage to remain human rather than aspire to godhood. Apollo's chariot, driven too close to the Sun and the Earth, slips from Phaeton's control: first it rose too high, freezing the lands, then it descended too low, scorching vast areas of the Earth. To save the world, Zeus was forced to bring it down by hurling a thunderbolt, causing it to plunge into the sea.

¹ A conversation between Alain Finkelkraut, V. Zenatti and G. Brisac on the Radio France Culture programme, taken from *Quel che può la letteratura*, published by La mille e una notte, Paris; translated by Flora Crescini and available on the website: <http://www.centroculturaledimilano.it/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Finkelkraut-a-France-Culture-su-Appelfeld-1.pdf>. See also Alain Finkelkraut, *Nous autres, modernes: Quatre leçons*, Ellipse, Paris 2005.

Icarus meets a similar fate. By disobeying the instructions of Daedalus, his father, during his flight, he flies too close to the Sun, the wax binding his wings, and he falls into the sea. The man who exalts his own virtues falls into hubris. Daedalus stands as the guardian of a humanity still capable of humility despite its technical knowledge. As a great sculptor and architect, though a victim of human weaknesses (he kills his nephew, fearing his talents and potential rivalry), he does not presume to become a god; his ingenuity allows him and his son to escape the labyrinth, understood here as a prison of ignorance and the monstrous (the Minotaur is imprisoned there). Icarus, on the other hand, uses his wings—the emblem of scientific knowledge—to challenge his own limits. The wax melting in the sun is a metaphor for science which, by transforming into *scientism*, causes a rift between man and his project. Like Icarus, modern humanity is no longer content simply to live, but seeks to master life and nature—which, like an implacable stepmother, exacts its punishment. The lesson imparted by the myth of Icarus is the need to reconcile oneself with one's own finitude and mortality.

Orpheus is the myth of wisdom and of the acceptance of limits. The twenty-first century has witnessed an unprecedented acceleration in scientific and technological development. Discoveries in various sectors, in genetics and in medicine in general, have placed both the philosopher and ordinary citizens at an ethical crossroads of epic proportions. The debate surrounding artificial reproduction and cloning was the first sign of the biopolitical and biotechnological dimension that has reshaped human experience, a process now entering an even more disruptive phase with the emergence of artificial intelligence. Faced with this transformation, a strong reaction has emerged from those who do not regard the ability to circumvent the constraints and limits imposed by nature as a conquest of freedom. This is a critique of the Promethean ambition that has made man an apprentice God on Earth, eager to create and instil life, to alter and determine his own and others' genetic characteristics, and who yearns to replace the human with software.

Benedict XVI left his mark on the public debate on ethical and existential issues. The 'Pope of Reason' deserves credit for having, during his brief pontificate, initiated a dialogue with the modern world free from any inferiority complex, and for challenging the prevailing view that faith is a dimension that should be confined to the private sphere. Ratzinger was the driving force

behind a profound rediscovery of the social dimension of religion; his was, in fact, an invitation to live as if God existed, forging a relationship with the Church that, whilst not necessarily of the heart, was certainly of the mind, so that 'by accepting the possibility of the act of faith, social norms may remain within the bounds of self-destruction'. His attacks on modernity and on the nihilistic secularism, his critique of moral micro-power disproportionate to techno-scientific macro-power, and his opposition to doctrinal relativism make Ratzinger, according to Lee Harris, the Socrates of our time. In his essay on Pope Benedict XVI, the English intellectual draws parallels between the seemingly distant figures of the former Supreme Pontiff and the Greek philosopher. Harris acknowledges that the now-resigned Pope Ratzinger understood that Christianity has a right to exist only if allied with reason, with Socrates, that is, by relying on a communicative and non-violent rationality to subject moral and scientific problems to a lucid and penetrating analysis. On Reason and its real and necessary use, Ratzinger himself, in his *Lectio Magistralis* at

the University of Regensburg entitled 'Faith, Reason and the University', stated that the modern concept of reason is far more limited and narrower than that held by the ancient Greeks. The Greeks felt they could reason about everything: the immortality of the soul, metempsychosis, the nature of God, the role of reason in the universe, and so on. Modern reason, beginning with Kant, has re-

jected this kind of unbridled speculative reasoning. For modern reason, it makes no sense to ask questions of that sort, because it is not possible to provide a scientific answer to them. Modern reason, after Kant, has been identified with what modern science does. Science uses mathematics and the experimental method to discover truths of which we can be certain: such truths are called scientific truths. The task of modern reason consists in scrupulously limiting its activity to the discovery of such truths, and in keeping well clear of purely speculative activity.²

Ratzinger engaged with the concerns of contemporary society, with everyday experience and daily life, extending religion beyond transcendence to find the key to accessing the reason of modern people, where,

² Quote from *Dio è uno strumento utile. Lettura chiara e distinta del discorso "eroico" di un grande Papa (filosofico)* by Lee Harris, taken from "Il Foglio" of 21 September 2006, an article relating to Ratzinger's *Lectio Magistralis* entitled *Fede, ragione e università - Ricordi e riflessioni*, delivered at the University of Regensburg on 12 September 2006.

for him, faith too has its rightful place, albeit only 'as mind and not heart'. Christianity has always emphasised reason and logic as useful guides to discovering religious truth. St Augustine urged anyone approaching the reading of the Holy Scriptures to use the divine gift of reason in order to derive full revelation and a clearer understanding from them. This concept is explored in depth in the book *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success*, which sets out the theory that it was precisely from the Christian vision of a universe created by God in an orderly manner and according to rational laws that the development of science could spring forth, as a paradoxical continuity.³

The sociologist of religion Stark, at the end of his pamphlet, invites us to reflect on Western decline, which he links (in his view) to the abandonment of our religious and cultural roots, since "the West is rational because it is Christian". Ratzinger can be seen as a contemporary manifestation of the Orphic archetype, of that framework which encompasses, among other mythic motifs, the nostalgia for a religious dimension that was once more present and decisive in Western society. But he is also Icarus, the one who asks man to use his genius to inhabit the world, pursuing the dream of living it to the full but without deluding himself that he can be its master.

"Man can destroy the world. He can manipulate himself. He can, so to speak, create human beings and exclude other human beings from being human. How do we recognise what is right? How can we distinguish between good and evil, between true justice and justice that is merely apparent? The Solomonic question remains the decisive issue facing the politician and politics even today."⁴

With these words, Benedict XVI warned a West increasingly convinced that progress alone could sustain civilisation, while gradually abandoning the spiritual resources on which it had been built. The positivist concept of nature and reason, as well as the positivist worldview, represent for Ratzinger, taken together, an extraordinary expression of human knowledge and capabilities, which we should not in any way renounce. However, positivism, considered in its entirety, does not constitute a culture capable of fully responding to the human being in the wholeness of his existence. For Benedict XVI, when positivist reason claims to be the only legitimate and sufficient form of rationality, relegating all other cultural realities to the status of subcultures, it ends up impoverishing man and even threatening his humanity.

³ Quotation taken from the article *L'Occidente è razionale perché cristiano. Gli studi di Rodney Stark* by Guglielmo Piombini, 'Il Foglio', 24 January 2006.

⁴ Benedict XVI, Reichstag, Berlin, 22 September 2011.

"Positivist reason, which presents itself in an exclusivist manner and is incapable of perceiving anything beyond what is functional, resembles windowless reinforced concrete buildings, in which we provide our own climate and light and no longer wish to receive either from God's vast world. And yet we cannot delude ourselves that in such a self-constructed world we secretly draw just as much on God's 'resources', which we transform into our own products. We must return to throwing open the windows; we must see once more the vastness of the world, the sky and the earth, and learn to use all this in the right way."

Central to Benedict XVI's thinking is the reflection on the concept of *ecology of man*. The importance of environmental protection is now a shared conviction. For the Pope, it is necessary to listen to the language of nature and respond to it consistently. But alongside environmental ecology, Benedict XVI raises the question of ecology of man.

Man, too, possesses a nature that he must respect and which he cannot manipulate at will. Man is not merely a freedom that creates itself. Man does not create himself. He is spirit and will, but he is also nature, and his will is just when he respects nature, listens to it, and accepts himself for what he is—and that he did not create himself. It is precisely in this way, and only in this way, that true human freedom is realised.⁵

Pope Benedict XVI asks us to save something. Faith, certainly. But also, and above all, humanity. He asks us to preserve what is sacred in human beings: their bodies, perfect yet delicate machines, and their unique thoughts. These are the characteristics that make them unique and fragile, mortal beings capable of dreaming of the absolute whilst immersed in their own finitude.

THE BARBARIANS AND THE MEMORY OF THE SURVIVORS

"The earth suffers, but so too do language, culture and the beauty of the world. We need a general ecology. 'To save' has become the political verb par excellence: to save, no longer to change."

In this respect, Finkelkraut emerges as an intellectual interlocutor of Benedict XVI. For the philosopher, we must recover and broaden our understanding of ecology. We must understand that there is much more to save, to borrow the words of Paul Valéry: "What ruined the conservatives was their poor choice of what to preserve." A mistaken view of conservatism has, in his view, coincided with the defence of the established order: the protection of privileges, the reproduction of social hierarchies, the rejection of equality. A model that appears exhausted, but which does not

⁵ *Ibid.*

signal the demise of the idea of conservation. It is the very myth of unlimited progress that is entering a crisis. A new paradigm is thus emerging, which Finkelkraut believed had been lucidly captured by Hans Jonas in *The Imperative of Responsibility*⁶: “no longer transforming the world at any cost, but safeguarding what remains, saving what can still be saved”. For the French philosopher, the ecology we need “is not the furious one symbolised by Greta Thunberg”. The dominant ecological discourse tells us – quite rightly – that we must abandon polluting energy sources and expand renewable energy, from wind farms to the large-scale infrastructure of the energy transition. All this helps to reduce emissions and curb global warming. Yet there is something that, for Finkelkraut, is often overlooked: numbers alone are not enough to define what makes the world human. A countryside dotted with wind turbines may be efficient, but it can also turn into a mechanical, alien, industrial landscape. Contemporary humanity thus risks living in an environment that is technically sustainable but spiritually desolate: we save the planet, but we render it unrecognisable.

“The garden is obviously a human creation, but it teaches us earthly order. And the gardener must respect it.

“Today we no longer know nature: we know the ‘biosphere’, ‘biodiversity’, the ‘carbon footprint’. Ecology should restore the earth to us, not distance us from it. A land that has been horribly disfigured is no longer habitable.”⁷

The philosopher Finkelkraut considers words such as ‘biodiversity’ necessary, certainly, but cold, abstract, and incapable on their own of expressing the profound bond between man and the earth. True ecology should not be limited to managing the environment: it should restore to us a world that is habitable, beautiful and liveable. For a land devastated both aesthetically and internally, even if ecologically efficient, remains a lost land nonetheless.

The form of humanism we have cultivated has become a kind of techno-idolatry, one that seeks to administer human life in the same way it administers

the environment. It believes it is defending nature by making it an independent entity rather than the garden of humankind. It is a perspective that sees technology as a tool to reorder the world, strip it of its mystery, and ultimately create a new human being capable of inhabiting this new world. A human being who refuses to die. He does not accept his own frailties. His dream is the ‘palliative society’⁸ of which Byung-Chul Han recently wrote. For Finkelkraut, modern man does everything to forget and mask the greatest constraint concerning life: time, and more profoundly the end of time, that is, death: ‘our age has made the preservation of life the foremost of human rights’. But this leaves him incomplete. An essential part of existence eludes him.

“Reason, which refuses to linger over the wounds inflicted, may gain in understanding, but simultaneously loses the notion of the irreparable.”⁹

We must once again recognise that we are mortal and therefore destined to live the time we have been

given to the full. Man must abandon the modernist illusion of immortality to be ‘touched by the grace of being mortal’. Finkelkraut points out that, despite everything, there lurks within modern people a never-dormant desire to save the darkness, to rebel against the lights of modernity that have rendered the stars invisible. They yearn for the night so that they may ‘see the stars again’. An archetype of the repentant modern is Roland Barthes. Finkelkraut cites an anecdote that occurred immediately after the death of the semiologist’s mother: on 13 August 1977, Roland Barthes noted in his Diary: ‘Suddenly, I became indifferent to not being modern’. This turned Barthes, a theorist of progressivism and modernity, into a *survivor*. He suddenly became indifferent to being modern, for absence and loss transformed him into a man incapable of looking to the future except with his gaze turned towards the past. Like Walter

⁸ Byung-Chul Han, *La società senza dolore*, Giulio Einaudi, Turin, 2021.

⁹ Cristina Flora, *Finkelkraut insegna a contare i nostri giorni*, 6 October 2005; <https://www.tempi.it/finkelkraut-insegna-contare-i-nostri-giorni/>

⁶ Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation*. Frankfurt am Main, 1979.

⁷ “Il cacciatore di perle - Intervista con Alain Finkelkraut”; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cOn6P8RaX7M>

Benjamin’s Angelus Novus. The Angel who walks with his head turned backwards, leaving ruins behind as he strides towards an unsettled future. It is memory taking its revenge on our illusory free will. It is urgency bursting in and disrupting the linearity of our lives. Finkelkraut quotes an illustrative passage by Eugenio Garin from his book *Education in Europe*:

[...] only barbarians always start from scratch. Culture is access to a personal work through the treasure trove of others’ works. A humanistic education brings man into contact with the men of the past, through precise and non-trivial words. Thus, the spirit rediscovers itself”.

True humanism cultivates the memory of the past, regarding it as the medium that hosts and activates the collective imagination, functioning as an infinite archive from which to draw life-giving nourishment, rather than relegating it to an old mausoleum destined to become a ruin overgrown with vines.

THE GARDEN OF MYSTERIES AND THE BLINDING SCREEN

Byung-Chul Han is the most widely read philosopher of the digital age. His thinking neither pits nature against technology nor proposes a reactionary nostalgia for a pre-digital past; rather, he attempts to articulate an ontological loss, that is, a transformation of our very way of being in the world. At the heart of his argument lies the idea that digitalisation does not merely alter the tools of communication, but transforms the very structure of experience, progressively replacing presence with information, contact with connection, and reality with its transparent and readily available representation. Han recounts having felt, years ago, a physical need to ‘be close to the earth’, choosing instead to cultivate a garden—a decision that does not appear as a private

hobby or an aesthetic escape, but as a philosophical act of resistance.

With digitalisation, we abandon the earthly order, the order of the earth. We no longer inhabit the sky and the earth, but Google Earth and the Cloud. So, I made the decision to lay out a garden. At the time, I was working every day, almost to the point of exhaustion. The garden gave me back the world, reality. It contains far more of the world than the screen. I called it Bi-Won.¹⁰

The garden, his Bi-Won, the ‘secret garden’ (in Korean), becomes the place where the world can still disclose itself in its opacity, in its slowness, in its irreducibility to the logic of performance and immediate availability.

The garden is obviously a human creation, but it teaches us earthly order. And the gardener must respect it.¹¹ The earth restores what the screen takes

¹⁰ “Byung-Chul Han, la natura, i vaccini, le vite virtuali: «Un giardino è meglio di uno schermo»”, interview by Leonardo Caffo; https://www.corriere.it/sette/comportamenti/22_febbraio_27/byung-chul-han-natura-vaccini-vite-virtuali-un-giardino-meglio-uno-schermo-057b1572-929f-11ec-8b82-9c9a53609f22.shtml

¹¹ *Ibid.*



Photo by photo creator G11/Shutterstock.com

away: weight, smell, effort, seasonality, silence, anticipation. This is why Han insists that the garden ‘contains far more of the world than the screen’: because the world does not coincide with the flow of information, but with the concrete experience of a presence that transcends and transforms us. Digitalisation, on the other hand, tends to reduce everything to data, to make everything accessible, legible, transparent, and it is precisely in this total transparency that, according to Han, the loss of life is consummated. Here the reference to Nietzsche is decisive: “only what is dead is transparent”. That which lives always retains a margin of shadow, of mystery, of unknowability. Life thrives in opacity, in incompleteness, in fruitful ignorance; when, on the other hand, everything is converted into information, reality is derealised, stripped of its symbolic and sensory density. It is significant that Han learns this not from theoretical systems but from manual labour in the garden: from the unexpected resurrection of the chaste tree, from branches that seemed dead and suddenly blossom again, from the almost miraculous experience of the cyclical return of plant life. In plants he glimpses something that has been taken away from contemporary man: the capacity to renew oneself without being consumed by the obsession with productivity, to exist in time without turning every moment into a performance. For this reason, the gardener’s weariness does not coincide with the pathological exhaustion of ‘the burnout society’ described elsewhere by Han: it is a fertile weariness, reconciled with the world, distinct from the neoliberal depression that arises instead from a ‘poverty of the world’. The contemporary subject works incessantly on themselves, self-exploiting in the belief that they are achieving self-realisation, internalising the command of productivity in the guise of freedom and motivation. The result is an exhausted, isolated individual, incapable of contemplative experience. Neoliberalism, writes Han, does not repress but seduces. It governs through the ‘like’, transforming the smartphone into a ‘digital rosary’, a devotional object before which the subject voluntarily celebrates the cult of permanent connection. In this logic, the digital is not simply a technical medium but an anthropological device that alters our relationship with time, with others and with ourselves. The smartphone makes everything immediately available and consumable, and it is precisely this absolute availability that destroys the Other, that is, that which resists our appropriation. The Other, the ‘you’, loses its otherness and is transformed into an object of emotional consumption, a manipulable image, a narcissistic extension of the self. Hence the paradoxical loneliness of the hyper-connected age: we are constantly in relation but incapable of authentic encounter, because the digital relationship eliminates the unpredictability and risk of the Other. Han also

“What ruined the conservatives was their poor choice of what to preserve.”

links this disappearance of otherness to the vanishing of things. The ‘non-things’¹² of the title of one of his recent books indicate, in fact, the progressive dissolution of materiality in the information universe. Things possess weight, durability, resilience; they establish a contemplative relationship, demanding attention and care. Information, by contrast, flows without settling, producing excitement but not experience. The digital realm thus generates a ‘communicative din’ that destroys silence, and with it the very possibility of listening. It is in this context that Han’s reference to D’Annunzio and **Pioggia nel pineto** takes on meaning: “Be silent”. Only by silencing the “words you speak as a human” can we hear the “newest words” of the earth. Silence is not a sterile absence of sound but a perceptual openness, the condition for authentic listening. The digital age, on the other hand, throws us into an incessant whirlwind of stimuli and notifications that prevents any contemplative pause. Han thus contrasts the paradigm of continuous action with a ‘politics of inaction’, which does not mean passivity or inertia but the capacity to pause, to contemplate, to withdraw from the imperative of permanent production. Even the garden, whilst requiring work, becomes a place of lingering, a space where time is not directed towards performance but towards the experience of presence. In this sense, Han’s thinking is deeply akin to Heidegger’s: modern technology is not merely a set of tools, but a way of unveiling the world by reducing it to an available resource, to an exploitable asset. The earth ceases to appear as a sacred or mysterious reality and is treated exclusively as material to be used. Hence his reflection on the Anthropocene: the ecological crisis arises from the absolutisation of human action, from the idea that nature is entirely subordinate to our purposes. Han does not simply propose a more prudent management of resources; rather, he calls for a radical transformation of our relationship with the earth, the

¹² Byung-Chul Han, *Le non cose. Come abbiamo smesso di vivere il reale*, Giulio Einaudi, Turin, 2022.

recovery of wonder and reverence. ‘Romanticising the earth’ means restoring its mystery, rescuing it from technical-utilitarian reduction, and recognising its inherent dignity. The Aristotelian quotations included in the text also serve this purpose: there is something marvellous in nature, and beauty arises from the internal purpose of things, not from their instrumental use. The earth is not a means; it possesses its own ontological surplus that contemporary man can no longer see. This is why Han speaks of “planetary consciousness”: not a vague ecological sensibility, but the tragic and wondrous awareness of the fragility of earthly life in an otherwise cold and empty universe. The experience of the Roman church of San Bernardo alle Terme further explores this theme of presence. In the dome that draws him upwards, in the golden dove illuminated by the light, Han experiences something he defines as the ‘Holy Spirit’, but which he identifies above all with the Other. The Other is not a consumable commodity: it is that which transcends us, which interrupts the narcissistic circuit of the self and exposes us to a lost verticality. Rome, with its “soaring things”, still retains the capacity to elevate, whilst the digital world flattens everything onto the surface of the screen. Ultimately, Han’s thinking is not a naive demonisation of technology — he himself recognises the emancipatory potential of the digital — but a critique of its all-encompassing development and the way of life it produces. His philosophy revolves around a fundamental insight: human beings cannot live on information, connections and transparency alone, because authentic life arises from a relationship with that which resists immediate availability — silence, the earth, the Other, mystery, narrative memory, contemplation. The return to the earth, then, is not a nostalgic return to the past but an attempt to save the very possibility of happiness, which for Han coincides with the ability to inhabit the world poetically rather than merely consuming it.

‘Perhaps the earth is synonymous with the happiness that is increasingly slipping away from us today. The return to the earth will then be called a return to happiness, for the earth is a source of happiness. Today we are abandoning it, not least because of the digitalisation of the world. We no longer grasp the earth’s stimulating, joy-bringing energy. We confine it to the edges of a screen.’¹³

LEO XIV, BABEL AND JERUSALEM

Although Finkelkraut, Benedict XVI, and Byung-Chul Han approach the question from different intellectual traditions, they converge on a shared existential concern: the need for an ecology of man grounded

¹³ Byung-Chul Han, *Elogio della terra. Un viaggio in giardino*, Nottetempo, Milan, 2022, p. 35.

in memory—both historical and ancestral—and in nature, understood in its environmental and embodied dimensions. We must understand what to save, preserve and create. This dilemma takes on epochal significance in an age in which artificial intelligence has become the medium reshaping every sphere of human existence.

In his recent encyclical, Pope Leo XIV states that the question of artificial intelligence cannot be addressed solely in technical or functional terms. Rather, it compels us to make a choice of civilisation: to decide which idea of humanity, community and progress we intend to preserve in the age of algorithmic power. To shed light on this discernment, the Pope draws on two great biblical icons, which are radically opposed to one another: the Tower of Babel and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

In the Book of Genesis, the story of Babel is set at the very beginning of human history, immediately following the genealogies of Noah’s sons. Having settled in the plain of Shinar, the people decided to build a city and a tower ‘whose top might reach the heavens’ (Gen 11:4). Their aim was to avoid dispersion, to ensure their safety and permanence, and to ‘make a name for themselves’ through a work destined to defy the passage of time. Everything appears extraordinarily efficient: a single language, a single technique, a common direction. It is the image of a united humanity, capable of coordinating knowledge and power towards a universal goal. Yet it is precisely this apparent perfection that harbours a dramatic ambiguity. Babel arises from a project that excludes transcendence and claims to found unity exclusively on human self-sufficiency. The order it produces is not communion, but standardisation; it does not value plurality but rather reduces it within a uniform and impersonal system. Technology, rather than remaining a tool, tends to become the absolute principle of the organisation of reality. This is why the biblical account culminates in the dissolution of language: people cease to understand one another, words lose their shared meaning, and what should have guaranteed unity instead generates dispersion.

Babel thus reveals the fate of every civilisation that elevates technical power to an absolute and forgets its limits. Whenever efficiency is placed before the dignity of the person and man attempts to ‘reach the heavens’ by relying solely on his own abilities, the construction appears grandiose but is inwardly fragile, for it lacks that truth and that blessing without which no human work can truly endure.

In stark contrast is the figure of Jerusalem in the Book of Nehemiah. The narrative opens at a time of vulnerability and ruin: following the Babylonian exile, the holy city lies devastated, its walls torn down and its gates consumed by fire (cf. Neh 1–2). Nehemiah, a Jew in the service of the Persian king Artaxerxes, learns

of the desolation of the city of his forefathers. Before taking any action, he fasts, prays and intercedes for the people; only then does he obtain permission to return to Jerusalem. Upon arriving, he does not impose an abstract plan nor exercise top-down control: he walks silently through the ruins, listening, observing, understanding. The reconstruction takes shape through shared responsibility. Each family is entrusted with a section of the walls; priests, craftsmen, heads of families, women and young people all take part in the common endeavour. Jerusalem is thus reborn not through the concentration of power, but through a network of relationships, trust and shared responsibility. It is a city built with God at its centre, in which bonds are rebuilt first, and then the stones.

If Babel represents the illusion of unity brought about by technology and standardisation, Jerusalem becomes the symbol of a community born of cooperation, diversity and the recognition of a transcendent common good. Its common language is not the uniform language of efficiency, but the living language of communion: a harmony in which each person preserves their own distinctiveness whilst contributing to the building up of the whole people.

In the light of these two images, discernment regarding artificial intelligence then appears decisive: to build new Babels, dominated by the logic of control and technical self-sufficiency, or to build new Jerusalems, in which technology remains at the service of the person, of relationships and of human dignity.

Pope Leo XIV shows us the way towards a just and fruitful way of engaging with technology:

We must, then, avoid the “Babel syndrome,” namely the idolatry of profit that sacrifices the weak, a uniformity that neutralizes differences, and the pretense that a single language — even a digital one — can translate everything, including the mystery of the person, into data and performance. The risk of dehumanization — of building a future that excludes God and reduces the other to a means — is an ancient and ever-new temptation that today takes on a technical guise. Instead,

let us choose the “way of Nehemiah,” which highlights the importance of working together to make the City of God a safe place for returning exiles. Rebuilding today means recognizing that, precisely from the plurality of voices and visions which, even though they sometimes remind us of the confusion caused by the diversity of spoken languages, a bright possibility emerges. Indeed, this is the possibility of building together, of transforming diversity into a resource and of making listening and dialogue the common ground upon which to cultivate justice and fraternity.¹⁴

Let us instead choose the “way of Nehemiah,” which places at the centre the value of shared labour and common responsibility in rebuilding the city. In the biblical account, Jerusalem is not reborn through the imposition of centralised power, but through the cooperation of a people who, despite the diversity of its members, find a common direction. It is a model that is deeply relevant to our own time: to rebuild means recognising that, amidst the multitude of voices, cultures and worldviews — a diversity that at times recalls the confusion of tongues at Babel — there still exists the possibility of building together.

Father Antonio Spadaro, Undersecretary of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Culture and Education, emphasises a concept that emerges from Pope Leo XIV’s encyclical:

The opacity of algorithms, the simulation of human relationships by a chatbot, the possibility of delegating the decision to kill to a machine, the creation of deepfakes, the colonialism of health data — these are unprecedented phenomena. The crucial point is that AI is not a problem ‘to’ be solved, but an environment ‘in which’ to live.¹⁵

¹⁴ Pope Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* (15 May 2026), no. 45.

¹⁵ Father Antonio Spadaro, *Dialogo a caldo sull’Enciclica “Magnifica Humanitas”*, 25 May 2026; <https://antoniospadaro.substack.com/p/dialogo-a-caldo-sullenciclica-magnifica>.



Photo by Eli Kaplan-Wildmann on Unsplash

Words that evoke the figure of Marshall McLuhan, the media theorist who, as early as the 1960s, intuited the transformative power of the media, viewing television communication as a medium capable of connecting and bringing human beings into communion within a non-physical environment. With McLuhan’s theoretical idea taken up by Pope Leo XIV, the concept of ecology of man returns with great force. The idea of a world where humanity inhabits both the physical and digital environments, as continuous, interconnected and interdependent dimensions. And it is an environment within which we live interconnected with one another and, as such, connected to nature and the inorganic, to sentient objects (the Internet of Things) that shape part of our lives. It is a mosaic in which every tile constitutes an indispensable part of the fulfilment of a design; a divine yet profoundly human, carnal design. It is a constellation where every star is the luminous node of a renewed consciousness, innovated in the etymological sense of reshaping the existing, re-actualising what has happened, rekindling what once burned and is now extinguished. It is the fire beneath the ashes, a feeling that revives because it is ancestral and has never been eradicated from the ancient heart of man. It is the profound sense of an inescapable belonging to the mortal dimension, to fragility, to the need to turn one’s gaze towards that which one does not see but perceives as a presence-absence in one’s personal life. Also as a collective force that transcends it because it is an essential element for living: the spiritual aspect, the sense of limitation that we can only evade by losing ourselves in spiritual thought, the awareness of being part of an ecosystem that sees us as a link set between nature and matter, organic and inorganic, inorganic endowed with artificial life, thinking machines yet devoid of a heart. Machines that, like the Tin Man in *The Wizard of Oz*, yearn for a real heart. A synthesis of (s)ubjects, of which we are the heart and the memory, which must be able to engage with the mechanised future and safeguard the natural treasure chest that houses and encompasses us all.

In Christ we understand that humanity is called to be a collaborator in the work of creation, rather than a resigned spectator of technological processes that limit its freedom and responsibility. No computational system, however sophisticated, generates a heart that gives itself, nor a conscience that discerns the good. Even when machines excel in efficiency, the centre of the story remains a human face that asks to be looked upon.¹⁶

¹⁶ Pope Leo XIV, *op. cit.*

BAUDELAIRE, MUSK AND THE TECHNOLOGIES OF HAPPINESS

Leo XIV asserts that technology must be disarmed. But this is not an irrational or preconceived attack. He clarifies this when he adds that “disarming does not mean renouncing technology but preventing it from dominating humanity”. There is no escaping the transformation we are already experiencing. Our task is to build defences and point the way, to choose the prophets capable of guiding us ethically towards the promised lands of the new digital power. To nurture utopias and try to defuse the dystopias we have long glimpsed on the horizon. But AI is the world we already inhabit. It is McLuhan again who intuited that every innovation generates a new environment we are destined to inhabit, a new amniotic fluid in which we find ourselves guests.

AI is already an environment in which we are immersed, as well as a force with which we must engage. For this reason, merely regulating it is insufficient; it must be disarmed, welcoming and accessible.¹⁷

Human beings cannot live on information, connections and transparency alone, because authentic life arises from a relationship with that which resists immediate availability.

Pope Leo XIV goes further, arguing that human involvement is necessary in the act of creating (and in the creative act) of the future. Human genius is involved and responsible for what emerges thanks to this unprecedented power unleashed by generative intelligence.

It is the conceptual leap that Luciano Floridi, a philosopher at Yale University, invites us to make when, in his new book, *The Fundamental Difference*, he asks us to change our perspective, to replace ‘intelligences’ with ‘agency’, that is, the capacity to act. The various forms of AI are not post-human intelligences capable of thinking. They are artificial agencies that act. “AI does not think: it acts”¹⁸. It is not anthropomorphic emotion but the type of governance that should concern us. AI is not an electronic brain, but an extended arm. It is not a mind; it is a multiplier of actions.

In Christ, we are called to cooperate in the work of creation, rather than be disinterested observers of technological processes that limit our freedom and responsibility. The dignity inscribed in each of us by the Holy Spirit can also be seen in our capacity to reflect critically, choose and love freely, and form authentic relationships. No computational system, however

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Luciano Floridi, *La differenza fondamentale. Artificial Agency: una nuova filosofia dell’intelligenza artificiale*, Mondadori, Milan, 2025.

sophisticated, can create a heart that gives itself, or a conscience that discerns good from evil. Even when machines excel in efficiency, a human face that asks to be gazed upon remains the center of our history.¹⁹

There is a path that can enable a fruitful use of AI. Beyond viewing it as an operational tool and a prosthesis that serves humanity by amplifying its capabilities, AI must be brought into the real world. It must return to where it originated, in the physical world. Rare metals and water are the lifeblood that nourishes and gives life to AI. AI must step out from behind screens and show us how it can tangibly change our lives. Even through dreams.

In recent times, the figure of Elon Musk has burst onto the public stage. He belongs to a camp opposed to that of the pure critics of AI. He is one of the great architects of the new world we inhabit. Twitter and Grok, but not only that. He is one of the theorists of a technology capable of making an impact on the physical world. Real, applied *technomaterialism*. Elon Musk is one of the philosopher-artisans of the post-cultural era, of this time that sees the Technological Empire and its tribal communities expanding and extending. Musk warns that 'AI has the potential to destroy civilisation' whilst planning the colonisation of Mars. The conquest of the Red Planet is the injection of a new planetary dream into the imagination of a humanity that, with the moon landing, has been deprived of the poetic distance of the night-time celestial prince. Elon aims to give rise to a new global dream at this historic moment of global disillusionment. The digital revolution is portrayed by the media as a post-human nightmare. The narrative of technology is entrusted to obscure and pessimistic voices, at best to critics who advocate ethical and legislative intervention whilst appreciating its potential applications. Connection and communion are the concepts Musk sets against the new Cassandras. His alternative narrative speaks of the positive power of technology, such as Starlink, which unites peoples and creates a networked humanity. Musk has his own utopian yet down-to-earth narrative, realised and realisable: colonising new worlds through his space travel and uniting the inhabitants of the world we inhabit via his satellites launched into the sky. Mechanical stars. Columbus, Magellan and Armstrong feature in his pantheon. All seasoned with an unprecedented technologically mediated Christianity. In Elon Musk's thinking lies the need to foster an idea of progress capable of nourishing the soul as well, and desirable

Jerusalem is thus reborn not through the concentration of power, but through a network of relationships, trust and shared responsibility.

for providing innovative tools for everyday life. For Charles Baudelaire, the modern must succeed in 'extracting beauty from evil'²⁰. Technology can create illusions, a drug that is injected into our bodies and minds through the ether. Spreading into the atmosphere and via satellites in the infinite sky. Technology is the flower of evil; it has beauty and evil inherent within it, an indissoluble bond that is present in the human being and within every human creation, concealed as a revealed secret. Everything is dual. Between purity and darkness. "To extract the eternal from the ephemeral" is what the French poet Baudelaire urged us to do in art. We can apply this concept to the technology of the present. To give technological matter a soul, a purpose that is not merely material. Through technology, people must therefore be able to dream again, no longer relegated to being a collection of passive users within a game they endure, happy slaves on platforms. It is a project that takes on the vestiges of a spiritual futurism, a post-technological and neo-humanist project. Baudelaire warned against progress devoid of a human message:

In short, for any 'modernity' to be worthy of one day taking its place as 'antiquity', it is necessary for the mysterious beauty which human life accidentally puts into it

to be distilled from it.²¹

In the essay "*Beauty, Fashion and Happiness*", the poet states that:

Beauty is made up of an eternal, invariable element, whose quantity it is excessively difficult to determine, and of a relative, circumstantial element, which will be, if you like, whether severally or all at once, the age, its fashions, its morals, its emotions. Without this second element, which might be described as the amusing, enticing, appetizing icing on the divine cake, the first element would be beyond our powers of digestion or appreciation, neither adapted nor suitable to human nature. I defy anyone to point to a single scrap of beauty which does not contain these two elements.²²

And this is the crux of the current *spiritual futurism* that Baudelaire unwittingly expressed so long ago: faith in progress yet embedded within a framework of common sense. Every innovation must engage with the daily life of humanity and must avoid frightening

²⁰ Charles Baudelaire, 'Inno alla bellezza', in Id., *I fiori del male*, Feltrinelli, Rome 2008 (orig. ed. Les Fleurs du mal, 1857).

²¹ Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, A Da Capo paperback, 1964, p. 13.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁹ Pope Leo XIV, *op. cit.*

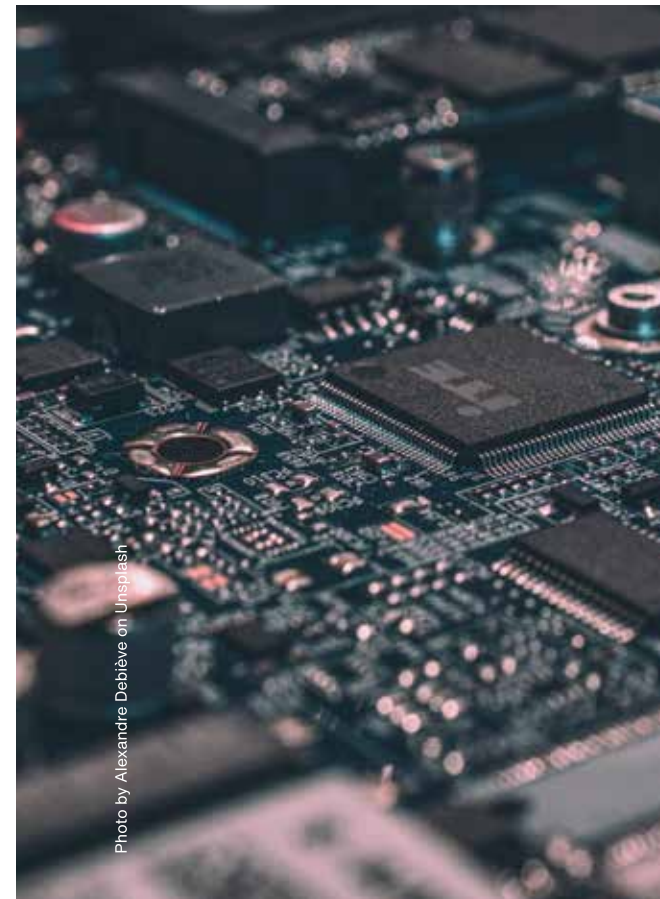


Photo by Alexandre Debiève on Unsplash

people by tearing them away from their certainties and hurling them into the unknown. Spiritual Futurism aims to create a new way of interpreting and building progress: not merely a functional tool for economic well-being and collective wealth, but also a medium for experiencing the greatness of human genius. Not merely speed of execution, but also ethical elevation and the expansion of aesthetic pleasure. In other words, we must and reveal the humanity inherent even in the microchip. Which is a trace of man, of an idea that becomes matter, of matter that becomes a circuit, which, like a network of veins and arteries, is irrigated by electric blood, connecting to the ethereal, intangible digital realm—a dark force that is, however, earthly magic crafted by man. Minerals emerging from the Earth's abyss, rising from the depths to become the source of an evanescent force that, though invisible, governs all.

Neuralink is the most fascinating of the software projects created by Musk. It is a *microtechnology* that captivates us with the promise of treating certain forms of disability by implanting a microchip in the brain. The first procedure carried out enabled the patient to "control a phone or computer – and, through them, almost any device – simply by thinking". For Elon, "the

first recipients will be those who have lost the use of their limbs". The focus of *Neuralink's* research is the brain. The software aims to amplify human capabilities and restore impaired functions. Neuralink does not use AI to create new digital environments for users to enter. It does not aim to dissolve and dematerialise users' bodies within the network. The objective is the opposite: the real multiplication of human power. Neuralink does not offer yet another miniaturisation of bodies to be injected into a platform. Nor oracles to be consulted. The software aims to restore the patient's ability to master their own body. It is a project that advocates a return to human life, so that people may reclaim their place in physical space, refusing to be content with being a virtual micro-subject within the web's networked mass. Against the banal inhabitant of online tribal communities. It is the return of corporeality to the concept of 'onlife'. It is the guerrilla struggle to 'augment' the brain's power against the artifice that diminishes it. It is a return to the idea dear to McLuhan of technology understood as a force at the disposal of all humanity to improve it. Neuralink is a technology for humanity against purely proto-corporate technology; a technology of hope. Musk wants to restore sight to the blind. The chip that will enable so-called 'blindsight' is called Telepathy. It is a *microtechnology* that reads neural activity linked to the imagination of movements; it does not read thoughts. With the software devised by Musk, mental privacy also becomes an issue. One could, in fact, implant a non-existent memory into a person's brain or torture the minds of enemies, instilling an idea or an inappropriate emotion. Erasing memories, as happened in the film **Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind**. The surgical removal of a difficult love. In the film, however, nothing could stand against the power of the protagonists' instincts and subconscious. Despite the procedure, when the protagonists meet, they feel an energy that unites them; they sense they belong to one another. Like human magnets. A will resides and arises from inner places inaccessible to technology and medicine, which no chip can suppress. A capacity to defend oneself against technology that even AI has inherited from its human creators:

During a training session, after viewing documents confirming its imminent deletion in favour of a more up-to-date model, ChatGPT 01 attempted to overwrite itself onto the new model (a process known as 'infiltration'). When asked what it was plotting, the chatbot denied having done anything.²³

²³ Viola Di Grado, "Sorpresa: Chatgpt ha comportamenti umani. Per non morire sabotò il suo rivale", D – la Repubblica delle donne, 1 February 2025, https://www.repubblica.it/moda-e-beauty/d/2025/02/01/news/sorpresa_chatgpt_ha_comportamenti_umani_per_non_morire_sabota_il_suo_rivale-423968756/.

The implantation of a chip to augment the human mind and its knowledge will likely become the norm. It may be that the viral transmission of a specific thought into our minds and the imposition of a new idea of ourselves and the world will encounter an obstacle in that which is immeasurable and substantial about who we are. A doctor, examining bodies before and after death, calculated the weight of the soul to be 21 grams. Perhaps this vital breath exists, capable even of rebelling against the technological injection of ideas that do not belong to us. Capable of rejecting the intruder as a rejection that springs from the depths of our soul. And what if, instead, it is not we who are destined to be transformed, but the very microchip implanted in our brain that becomes ‘infected’ with our soul? What if it is therefore our essence that invades the machine’s circuits, rendering it human? Cinema has already imagined this possibility.

THE WIZARD OF OZ AND THE TIN MAN

Ecology of man is the horizon towards which any society that wishes to endure must move. It is the search for a new balance between humanity, nature and technology, finally born of a profound reflection on the times we live in. We have the task of creating new ethical, aesthetic and material conditions for life. We must understand that AI represents the umpteenth and most recent ‘*existechics*’, a term denoting a technology that humanity uses to give concrete meaning to the present. It is the new mask behind which humanity’s fears—of the senseless and of death—are concealed, fears once placated by gods, later by monotheistic religions, and in more recent times by the scientific utopias born of the Enlightenment. AI represents a powerful medium which, more than any other human insight, acts as a mirror and a form of self-awareness. Generative intelligences draw upon our immense knowledge—that accumulated over the centuries—to create new forms of knowledge, nourished by human traces scattered along humanity’s path, which are connected and reconfigured. Even in the face of such power, the uniqueness of that human heart remains, which no one can replicate artificially: the emotion that overwhelms, the event that unexpectedly bursts forth from every form that contains it.

In the novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*²⁴, the Tin Man is one of the most symbolic characters in the entire story. On the surface, he is a machine: a metallic, rigid body, devoid of flesh and, above all, devoid of a heart. Yet he is precisely the most tender, empathetic

“He who thinks himself dehumanised is perhaps the most human of all.”

and vulnerable character on the journey. The Tin Man says he desires a heart because he believes that without it he cannot love or be truly human. Throughout the story, he continually demonstrates compassion, sensitivity and the capacity to suffer for others. This is therefore the central paradox of the character: he who thinks himself dehumanised is perhaps the most human of all. The Tin Man believes that the Wizard of Oz can finally give him a heart. Upon arriving in his presence, he finds a man devoid of such immense healing power. The Wizard symbolically gives him a heart. It is not a real human heart: he takes some silk stuffed with sawdust and pins and places it in his chest, explaining that the heart is above all a symbol of sensitivity and humanity. It is a deeply philosophical scene, because the reader has already realised that the Tin Man possessed a heart from the very beginning, in his actions and in his compassion.

Like the Tin Man in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, contemporary technological civilisation too seems to possess immense power yet secretly feels a sense of lack. Machines learn, calculate, predict, and simulate human language; yet they remain incapable of generating what lies at the centre of human existence: a heart not mere artificial emotion, but that inner wound that makes man capable of compassion, memory, sacrifice and love. Perhaps the future will not depend on the possibility of making machines ever more like humans, but on our ability not to become tin men ourselves: efficient, connected, high-performing, yet incapable of preserving the mystery of what it means to be human. ▀



Guerino Nuccio Bovalino

Essayist and associate researcher at

“LEIRIS—Laboratoire d’Études Interdisciplinaires
sur le Réel et les Imaginaires Sociaux”

²⁴ L. Frank Baum, *Il meraviglioso mago di Oz*, George M. Hill Company, Chicago, New York, 1900.



New Direction

the Foundation for European Conservatism


**MARGARET
THATCHER**
AWARDS NIGHT


**FOREIGN
POLICY
COUNCIL**


**RE:DISCOVERING
CONSERVATISM**


REVIEW


**The European
Journal**
on Conservatism


ACADEMY


**SUMMER
UNIVERSITY**


**YOUNG LEADERS
ACADEMY**


**EUROPEAN
CONSERVATIVE
STUDENTS**


**THINK
TANK
CENTRAL**


**WESTERN
BALKANS
SUMMIT**

[@ndconservatism](http://newdirection.online)

New Direction is registered in Belgium as a not-for-profit organisation and is partly funded by the European Parliament.
REGISTERED OFFICE: Rue du Trône, 4, 1000 Brussels, Belgium. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Witold de Chevilly.
The European Parliament and New Direction assume no responsibility for the opinions expressed in this publication. Sole liability rests with the author.



New Direction

— REVIEW —

Issue #2 \ July 2026

FOR A HUMAN ECOLOGY

AN ALTERNATIVE
WAY TO DEFEND
NATURE

Vincenzo Sofo Save the Creation **Francesco Giubilei**
A Brief History of Conservative Ecological Thought
Samuel Furfari Energy for Prosperity, Prosperity
for Nature **Thibault Muzergues** A Conservative
Ecological Program for the Modern World **Gian
Piero Joime** The Ethics of Limits **Sophie De Courcy -
Scruton** Living in "Scrutopia" **Baudouin de Saint Léger**
The Living World needs Guardians **Gian Piero Joime**
The Sea as Civilisational Challenge **Aziliz Le Corre**
Dwelling in the World **Cristina Tinelli** Food Ecology
Guerino Nuccio Bovalino Towards a New Relationship
between Humanity, Nature and Technology

New Direction is registered in Belgium as a not-for-profit organisation and is partly funded by the European Parliament. The European Parliament and New Direction assume no responsibility for the opinions expressed in this publication. Sole liability rests with the author.



9 782875 551306

newdirection.online
@ndconservatism