

# **Socio-Ecology of the French Far Right: How the Far Right Rediscovered Ecology**

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*Illiberalism Studies Program Working Papers no. 12  
August 2022*

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Contemporary environmentalism encompasses a wide range of political sensibilities, from progressive to liberal to conservative and even reactionary. In 2000, the Swiss philosopher and environmental activist Dominique Bourg acknowledged in *Éléments*, the magazine of the French Nouvelle Droite (hereinafter: New Right): “they [the green parties] somehow captured, in the 1970s, an intellectual heritage and sensitivity much broader than what they represented then.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, parallel to the progressive tradition of environmentalism, there is another, equally old, conservative tradition of conservation born of the legacy of Romanticism, especially in political terms. This form of socio-ecology has been little studied, with the exception of the well-documented interest of Nazism in it.

There are various organizations and people that have been advancing a socio-ecological agenda and which also position themselves on the far right, although some, such as philosopher Alain de Benoist, reject this “broadly disqualifying” etiquette (far right). The French New Right, of which he is the main intellectual figure, developed an elaborate socio-ecological agenda in the 1980s, which, being both anti-modern and anti-Western, served as a model for other far-right activists, particularly those drawn to identity politics, which the New Right greatly contributed to defining. By recasting its points of reference, notably by mobilizing the work of left-wing intellectuals, the New Right gradually purged its “identity-politics premises” of “anti-Semitic and Hitlerian” rhetoric starting in the 1970s.<sup>2</sup> The New Right has indeed been an important current of French far-right thinking since 1968, and has often served as an inspiration for far-right movements elsewhere in Europe, and even in America. Over the last forty years, the French New Right has allowed for the spread and acclimatization of strongly socio-ecological messages, which happen to be waning in other far-right streams of thought. This essay puts forward a reflection on the socio-ecological rhetoric of part of the French revolutionary far right, that is, its identity politics, along with revolutionary-nationalist, pagan, and neo-Nazi undercurrents, which I have studied for almost 20 years.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dominique Bourg, “Enquête sur la gauche,” *Éléments*, no. 99 (November 2000), p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Nicolas Lebourg, *Les nazis ont-ils survécu? Enquête sur les Internationales fascistes et les croisés de la race blanche* (Paris: Seuil, 2019), p. 157.

<sup>3</sup> More in Stéphane François, *Les vert-bruns. L'écologie de l'extrême droite française* (Lormont : Le Bord de l'eau, 2022).

## Forgotten and rediscovered: Far Right and the Natural World

### Background: the Far Right's view of ecology

Far-right leanings have been interested in socio-ecology for a relatively long time. The first coherent expression of this interest was put forth back in the mid-1980s, following the adoption of the German Conservative Revolution of the Weimar Republic years as an intellectual touchstone by revolutionary-nationalist and New Right circles, as well as its reabsorption by neo-Nazi militants. On the other hand, in Germany, an extreme right-wing socio-ecology was reborn, or rather reappeared, in the 1970s, as arguments developed at the beginning of the 20th century were recast. This is the case, for example, of Pastor Werner Haverbeck and Renate Riemeck, a medievalist and former secretary of the SS member Johann von Leers. Both are committed National Socialist activists<sup>4</sup> and members of the Anthroposophical Society.<sup>5</sup> However, socio-ecology has only really become a major issue for the European far right since the early 2000s.

This form of socio-ecology can be divided into several types. One key theme, which the New Right was mostly responsible for conceptualizing, is a conception of populations as essentialized ethnic groups inhabiting territories of their own. In this sense, their ecology is a socio-ecology of populations, and is governed by anti-miscegenation. This fear of race mixing goes along with the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss' theory of ethno-difference, which he developed in a famous polemical lecture delivered in 1971 titled "Race and Culture." The ethnologist unwittingly became an important point of reference for the French New Right, and subsequently for the rest of the far right.

Beginning in the second half of the 1970s, biological racism gave way to a radical ethno-differentialism, reinterpreted here both in the sense of radical relativism and in that of miscegenation, which the British Marxist political scientist Martin Barker called the "new racism" in 1981.<sup>6</sup> Members of the New Right, and the extreme right-wing groups that followed them, thus went from an aggressive defense of the white race and its culture in the 1960s to calling for this race's restraint during the following decade, in the name of difference and the risk of ethnocide, thus effecting a complete reversal of Lévi-Strauss' discourse. This ethno-differentialism is opposed to assimilationism. It can be defined as both a right to be different, and therefore a right to promote the identities and cultures of peoples, including immigrants on European soil, and as a manifestation of rootedness in a territory. For extreme right-wing milieus, promoting cultural diversity means opposing Western homogenization, i.e. Western universalism and the ideology of human rights, which they see as merely another factor of acculturation and domination.

This brand of ethno-differentialism may also be developed in the direction of segregationist policies (positing that all mixing or contact leads to a loss of difference), or in that of anti-immigration policies (deeming that non-European immigrants have to return "home" to find "their roots," or—for the most racist of these ethno-differentialists—their "natural environment"). This ethno-differentialism is also based on the idea that there are human races with their own genesis: since the appearance of their school of thought in 1968, members of the New Right movement have defended the hypothesis of polygenesis, which promotes the multi-regional, and therefore multiracial, origin of the different "human species" and cultures.

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<sup>4</sup> Haverbeck married Ursula Wetzel in 1970, who is known today for her Holocaust denialism.

<sup>5</sup> He published two books on ecology with an anthroposophical publisher: Werner Haverbeck, *Die andere Schöpfung. Technik: Ein Schicksal von Mensch und Erde* (Stuttgart: Uraschhaus, 1978); *Entschluß zur Erde: Zerstörung und Leben in unserer Hand* (Stuttgart: Uraschhaus, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Martin Barker, *The New Racism: Conservatives and the Ideology of the Tribe* (London: Junction Books, 1981).

Members of the New Right argue for the multi-regional origin of modern humans: they hold true ecology to consist of preserving this diversity by keeping the great “races” in their respective natural environments, as we might do with animals. This socio-ecology of populations postulates the incompatibility of different cultures. Within the extreme right, this hypothesis has replaced old-fashioned racism, and the rejection of Islam has replaced that of immigrants. They have moved from the biological to the cultural: no longer is the immigrant rejected in the name of racial arguments, but instead in the name of civilizational arguments, such as the supposed incompatibility, for example, of Arab-Muslim culture or civilization and European or Western culture or civilization.

Another major socio-ecological theme, once again conceptualized by the New Right, is the rejection of liberal society (and thus of progressivism) together with capitalism, which stems from both the New Right and revolutionary-nationalism, the latter being defined as a “current that conceives of neo-fascism as a national and social liberation movement similar to that of decolonization,”<sup>7</sup> which is very close to certain aspects of the ideology of the New Right. In point of fact, Benoist stands convinced of the imminent collapse of Western society,<sup>8</sup> born of the liberalism of the Enlightenment. Since the beginning of 2010, his thinking has had elements of survivalism, or rather a neo-survivalism that encompasses de-growth and environmentalism, and is more focused on developing independence from the economic system and a closer relationship to nature. Neo-survivalism promotes a return to ruralism, to a frugal, quasi-autarchic, nature-friendly way of life in a world of deep-rooted, anti-capitalist communities. It also promotes a return to a traditional way of life, which, modeled on pre-state societies, is both archaic and anarchic. This anxiety has seen the far right come closer to environmentalist arguments: some of its interest has been piqued by the topic of de-growth (including the notion of “happy sobriety”), but in their case associated to the twofold rejection of immigration and gender theory.

According to these militants, we must respect the specific sexual dimorphism of humans and the natural order, and thus reject theories of gender, homosexuality, gay parenting, sex changes, abortion, etc., in connection with the idea of preserving races, in this case the white race. Extreme right-wing ecology is therefore not only a defense of nature. It is a socio-ecology of populations with fundamentally differentialist and anti-modernist foundations, to be understood in the sense of a violent rejection of the Enlightenment and its philosophical and political values. Behind the defense of ecology, there is among these activists a nostalgia for a closed, traditional world, respectful of regional and cultural particularities. This vision of the world must be seen as a return to a primary, organic state in which humans live in harmony with nature, in a traditional and organic society.

### **Genealogy of Socio-Ecology in France**

In France, the far right’s interest in environmentalism dates back to the mid-1980s, when the first consistent expressions of this interest were put forward. In Germany, this interest extends back to the postwar period when, in late 1960s, early-20th-century arguments were reprised both from the

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<sup>7</sup> Lebourg, *Les nazis ont-ils survécu?*, p. 48.

<sup>8</sup> Alain de Benoist, *Au bord du gouffre: La faillite annoncée du système de l’argent* (Paris: Krisis, 2011).

*Lebensreform* social movement<sup>9</sup>, from the *völkisch* movement<sup>10</sup>—repurposed without their prior vociferous anti-Semitism—and even, for some, from anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist Strasserism (so-called left-wing Nazism). Otto Strasser had summoned “a peasant worker, a peasant intellectual, a peasant soldier”—figures required for the social upheaval that would supposedly be brought about by the dislocation of industrial society, the dismantling of factories, the reduction of urban populations, and the forced transfer of citizens to work on land regeneration. For purposes of comparison, some aspects of Strasser’s ideological leanings towards social rupture are reminiscent of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, or the acts of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.<sup>11</sup> Otto Strasser also promoted the idea that “Germany should support all the national liberation movements, from India to Brittany, from the Basque Country to Flanders, and thus organize around Greater Germany a Europe of regions that breaks up the old Western imperialist nation-states.”<sup>12</sup>

In the French case, consistent expressions of ecological thinking did not come from the Front National (English: National Front, now the Rassemblement National, or “National Rally”), which took scant interest in this issue. Instead, they were the work of the New Right, together with other attempts that date back to the 1970s and stem from the circles of the former French SS. What I propose here is to return to this genealogy in order to show how the far right gradually took up this theme and made it into an important component of their current ideology.

Considerations of environmentalism could be found already in the 1950s. For example, former right-wing extremist and anti-Semitic activist Henry Coston<sup>13</sup> kept in touch with the French pioneers of organic farming.<sup>14</sup> Forty years later, demonstrating perfect theoretical consistency, he published a work titled *Non! L’écologie n’est pas de gauche (No! Ecology is not left-wing)*.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, there is also an interest in a form of political ecology from a reactionary right that is rather traditionalist, anti-modern, regionalist, corporatist, and anti-globalist. For these conservatives, “the countryside is fixed in its role of conserving the balances of yesteryear, preserving a regulated way of life, and maintaining

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<sup>9</sup> *Lebensreform* thought was fundamentally ambiguous, both reactionary and progressive: individual emancipation, personal fulfillment, self-reform, but also organicism and integration into the totality. This movement criticized urbanization and industrialization and advocated as a slogan a “return to nature.” The central idea was that a lifestyle closer to nature was healthier than living in cities, including the use of alternative medicine, yoga, nudism, and vegetarianism.

<sup>10</sup> This movement is a form of ultranationalism and racialism, more or less neopagan, present in Germany and Austria from the second half of the 19th century.

<sup>11</sup> Patrick Moreau, “La république allemande de Weimar entre révolution nationale-socialiste et révolution communiste,” in Stéphane Courtois, Jean-Pierre Deschodt, and Yolène Dilas-Rocherieux (eds.), *Démocratie et révolution, 1789–2011: 100 textes fondateurs* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2012), p. 665.

<sup>12</sup> Lebourg, *Les nazis ont-ils survécu?*, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> On Henry Coston, see Michaël Lenoir, “Henry Coston (Henri Coston, dit) et Jacques Ploncard d’Assac (Jacques Ploncard, dit),” in Pierre-André Taguieff (ed.), *L’Antisémitisme de plume, 1940–1944: Études et documents* (Paris: Berg International, 1999): pp. 370–384.

<sup>14</sup> See Anna Trespeuch-Berthelot, “La genèse de l’agriculture biologique en France et en Allemagne, de l’entre-deux guerres aux années 1970: Circulations transnationales et cultures politiques,” in *Mission Écologie*, ed. Olivier Hanse, Annette Lensing, and Birgit Metzger (Bern: Peter Lang, 2018), pp. 91–114. The links between organic farming and naturopathy and the extreme right wing, though they may not be frequent, certainly do exist: thus, the Quebecker naturopath Jacques Baugé-Prévost, member of the New European Order, is the author of a work titled *Le Celtisme: L’Éthique biologique de l’homme blanc* (Lausanne/Montréal: Éditions celtiques, 1973); republished under the title *L’Éthique biologique de l’homme blanc* (Chevaigné: Éditions du Lore, 2018) in which, between racist and anti-Semitic considerations, he promotes “hygiene and natural medicines” and the arguments of founder of the Anthroposophy Society, Rudolf Steiner.

<sup>15</sup> Henry Coston, *Non! L’écologie n’est pas de gauche* (Paris: Éditions Henry Coston, 1995).

family and moral order.”<sup>16</sup> Ruralist writers such as Henri Pourrat or Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz came to embody these discourses and the Vichy regime defended them, even though this was the time during which French technocratic agricultural policy was conceptualized.

However, it was not until the 1970s that this far-right form of identity-politics ecology really came to be theorized. One of its pioneers was the former French SS member Maurice Martin, who was also a former member of the Charlemagne Division (a SS division composed with French volunteers), under the alias Robert Dun. This self-taught author, who used several pseudonyms—notably Régis Soubeyran and Fernand Chabriat—supported a form of degrowth radical ecology back in the early 1970s, publishing in a journal notably called *L’Or vert* (Green Gold). Since then, influenced by his experience in the SS, he has published a large number of articles praising a radical, degrowth, entrenched, racist, anti-materialist, spiritualist, and neo-pagan ecology. In this sense, he can be considered one of the precursors of identity-politics ecology, and above all as an entrepreneur of ideas. He served as a link between different generations of activists: former Nazis, activists from the 1970s and 1980s such as Pierre Vial, a French medievalist, founding member of GRECE (Groupement de Recherche et d’Études pour la Civilisation Européenne, Research and Study Group for European Civilization,), and the generation of the 2000s, which published his texts and articles, in particular the publisher Éditions du Crève-Tabous.

Among this young generation was the first team of the magazine *Réfléchir & Agir* (Reflect upon and act). As Robert Dun, Maurice Martin collaborated on all issues of this magazine, which was at once neopagan, neo-Nazi, and anti-Semitic, from its launching in 1993 until its disappearance in 2002. Claiming to be the “pagan New Right,”<sup>17</sup> the members of this magazine are quite close to those of *Terre & Peuple* (Land and people). Upon Martin/Dun’s death, the New Right identity-politics activist Pierre Vial paid tribute to it in *Terre & Peuple*, with an article titled “In memoriam/My comrade Robert Dun.”<sup>18</sup> In fact, Maurice Martin, like other former SS officers (such as Henri Fenet, Yves Jeanne, Pierre Bousquet), had participated in the publications and/or activities of the New Right until the mid-1980s. In 1983, he published a book at the Livre-club du Labyrinthe (the publishing house of the New Right), a translation of Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.<sup>19</sup> Dun especially influenced the most *völkisch* fringe figures in their work, in particular Pierre Vial, Jean Haudry, and Jean Mabire.<sup>20</sup> Dun was the author of *L’Âme européenne, réponse à Bernard-Henri Lévy* (The European soul: A Response to Bernard-Henri Lévy),<sup>21</sup> *Vers l’Europe retrouvée ou la mort* (Towards a rediscovered Europe or death),<sup>22</sup> and *Les Confidences d’un loup-garou* (Confessions of a werewolf).<sup>23</sup>

To understand the interest of these identity-politics activists in ecology, we have to go back to the New Right, which developed a very coherent ecological narrative in the mid-1980s. Members of the New Right claim that most ecological themes belonged, and even still do, to an intellectual tradition

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<sup>16</sup> Pierre Barral, “La Terre,” in Jean-François Sirinelli (ed.), *Histoire des droites*, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, “Tel,” 2006), p. 49.

<sup>17</sup> *Réfléchir & Agir*, no. 14 (spring 2003), p. 57.

<sup>18</sup> Pierre Vial, “En mémoire/Mon camarade Robert Dun,” *Terre & Peuple*, no. 11 (spring 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra*, trans. and ed. Robert Dun (Paris: Livre-club du labyrinthe, 1983).

<sup>20</sup> On identity-politics ideology, see Stéphane François, *Au-delà des vents du Nord*.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Dun, *L’Âme européenne, réponse à Barnard-Henri Lévy* (Saint-Étienne/Forez: Éditions du crève-tabou, 1991).

<sup>22</sup> Robert Dun, *Vers l’Europe retrouvée ou la mort* (Saint-Étienne/Forez: Les Amis de la Culture Européenne, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> Robert Dun, *Les Confidences d’un loup-garou*. Suivi de *La Société française, société multiculturelle?* (Saint-Étienne/Forez: Les Amis de la Culture Européenne, 2005).

that was more conservative than liberal. Indeed, according to them, socio-political ecology is heir to Romanticism rather than to the Enlightenment, an idea that we find in Louis Dupeux, who aptly demonstrated this conservative orientation of the first German environmentalists,<sup>24</sup> and in Thomas Keller, who highlighted the importance of conservative themes among German environmentalists.<sup>25</sup> According to the former New Right activist Charles Champetier:

If we think, for example, of the virtues of natural life celebrated in the face of the vices of urban life, the idea of nature conceived as a harmonious order, the rejection of progress, the esthetic reaction against the ugliness of industrial society, the metaphor of the 'organic' as opposed to the 'mechanical,' or the 'living' as opposed to the abstract, the praise of rootedness and small communities,"<sup>26</sup> then "[...] the earth appears as the primordial giver of the nourishing and ordering element of a traditional mode of civilization that the industrial revolution will not cease to transform into a 'lost world' for which Romanticism was the first to be nostalgic."<sup>27</sup>

However, the New Right did not always profess such an interest in ecology, because for a time it praised technology and the Promethean character of European civilization. In the 1970s, Benoist rejected ecological catastrophism, while still acknowledging that the environment had actually degraded since the early 20th century and that market-oriented society bore responsibility for this.<sup>28</sup> At the time, Benoist deemed ecological thinking to be the consequence of a guilt complex stemming from Christianity. For the New Right of the 1970s, marked by positivism, nature remained the property of Man: Man can and must make it bear fruit and enhance it, anthropize it, but do so with a certain moderation to keep itself from the Promethean temptation.

### **The French New Right's Socio-Ecological Turn**

In the 1980s and 1990s, the New Right integrated the *völkisch* and anti-modern positions of 20th-century German philosopher Martin Heidegger and changed its positions. New Right theorists, Guillaume Faye in particular, noted the emergent globalization,<sup>29</sup> and theorized the question of identity in return. Seeking doctrinal renewal and new allies, Benoist took an interest, during the same period, in environmental and anti-globalization activists. This evolution caused a split within GRECE,<sup>30</sup> followed by the departure of its radical elements.

These new ecological reflections were also the consequence of closer ties with activists across the Rhine, who themselves had evolved considerably. A striking example is the evolution, uncommon in this milieu, of Henning Eichberg, a friend of Benoist. Eichberg was the master thinker of the German New Right (Neue Rechte) and German revolutionary nationalism, which followed on from Ernst Niekisch's National-Bolshevism (an ultranationalist and totalitarian version of a non-Marxist form of communism). Eichberg was a former member of the German Social Union (Deutsche Soziale Union: DSU), the party of that "left-wing Nazi," Otto Strasser. He discovered the authors of the Conservative Revolution in the 1960s. At the same time, he met with "several representatives of the French New

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<sup>24</sup> Louis Dupeux, "La version 'Völkisch' ..." in *La "Révolution conservatrice"*, ed. Louis Dupeux, pp. 185–192.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Keller, *Les Verts allemands: Un conservatisme alternatif* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993).

<sup>26</sup> Charles Champetier, "La droite et l'écologie," in Arnaud Guyot-Jeannin (ed.), *Aux sources de la droite: Pour en finir avec les clichés* (Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 2000), 56.

<sup>27</sup> Champetier, "La droite et l'écologie," p. 58.

<sup>28</sup> Robert de Herte [Alain de Benoist], "Les équivoques de l'écologie," *Éléments*, No. 21–22, (summer 1977), republished in Pierre Vial (ed.), *Pour une renaissance culturelle* (Paris: Copernic, 1979), p. 75.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Guillaume Faye, *Le Système à tuer les peuples* (Paris: Copernic, 1981).

<sup>30</sup> Note that *Grèce* is also the French spelling for the country Greece.



Right movement whose ideas [appealed to him] and whose propaganda he [would] spread on his return to Germany.”<sup>31</sup>

In 1979, then close to national-pacifist circles, he launched the magazine *Wir Selbst* (Ourselves),<sup>32</sup> which ran until 2002. Its content was national-revolutionary and it promoted left-wing themes. This quality magazine attracted personalities from a variety of backgrounds: former Maoists, anarchists, radical environmentalists, conservatives, and neopagans. In fact, Eichberg began to change his position on various issues: from promoting national-Bolshevism he moved towards an anarchic, environmentalist, federalist, and pacifist ethno-regionalism, which he still defends today. His socio-ecologist and national-revolutionary positions influenced Alain de Benoist—and then, via Benoist, the French radical far right.

As Klaus Schöneekäs writes, “Behind these utopias of a reconciliation of man with nature lies a long tradition that, through the Conservative Revolution, the youth movement, and the ‘reform of life,’ refers back to German Romanticism.”<sup>33</sup> It was by incorporating these references that the New Right was able to develop an environmentalist narrative, to which it gave doctrinal form at the beginning of the following decade. Thus, starting in 1993, Benoist published several French-language articles on environmentalism which were brought together in a book in 2007.<sup>34</sup> That same year, he devoted an issue of his magazine *Krisis* to this question,<sup>35</sup> while an issue of *Éléments* published a dossier on ecology the following year.<sup>36</sup> In 1993, the 37th annual GRECE colloquium was devoted to “The stakes of environmentalism.” In the 1990s, New Right awareness materialized in an editorial by Benoist under the pseudonym Robert de Herte,

“Certainly one can always discuss the real or supposed misdeeds of nuclear power, the reality of the “hole” in the ozone layer, or the worsening of the “greenhouse effect.” But there is no denying desertification and the drop in agricultural yields, acid rain, the deterioration of the phreatic layers, the loss of biodiversity, deforestation, and the retreat of arable land. There is no denying the decline in fishing stocks, the disappearance of humus and plant cover, land turned into runoff, rivers turned into sewers, the depletion of mining resources, the “bludgeoning” of soils by the intensive use of chemical fertilizers. Hans Jonas said that “the real threat posed by technology based on the natural sciences does not lie so much in its means of destruction as in its peaceful everyday use” (*Libération*, November 12–13, 1992, p. 32). The damage is in fact seen in daily life, with pollution affecting both habitats and species, chemical fertilizers whose residues are carried by water, pesticides, nitrates, and industrial waste. But the scale of the phenomenon is also global.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Pierre Milza, *L'Europe en chemise noire* (Paris: Fayard, 2002), p. 219.

<sup>32</sup> Patrick Moreau translates *Wir Selbst* into French as *nous-mêmes* (ourselves). Patrick Moreau, *Les Héritiers du III<sup>e</sup> Reich: L'extrême droite allemande de 1945 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), p. 174.

<sup>33</sup> Klaus Schöneekäs, “La ‘Neue Rechte’ en République Fédérale d’Allemagne,” *Lignes*, no. 4 (October 1988), p. 139, n. 34.

<sup>34</sup> Alain de Benoist, *Demain la décroissance: Penser l'écologie jusqu'au bout* (Paris: E/dite, 2007). This book was republished in 2018 by Éditions Pierre-Guillaume de Roux under the title *Décroissance ou toujours plus ? Penser l'écologie jusqu'au bout*.

<sup>35</sup> Alain de Benoist, “Écologie?” *Krisis*, no. 15 (September 1993).

<sup>36</sup> “L'écologie contre le marché,” *Éléments*, no. 79 (January 1994): pp. 5–18.

<sup>37</sup> Robert de Herte [Alain de Benoist], “La Nécessaire Rupture,” *Éléments*, no. 119 (winter 2005/2006), p. 3.

According to Alain de Benoist,

Environmentalism is born from the clear awareness that today's world is "full," and that it bears the mark of humankind throughout: no more frontiers to push back, none left to conquer. All human cultures interact with the Earth's ecosystem; all are able to see that unlimited expansion, economic growth as an end in itself, and the ever-accelerating exploitation of natural resources are damaging the regenerative capacity of this ecosystem. In addition, in the developed countries, agriculture is disappearing as the main way of life, with the result that the irreversible human temporality of cycles and seasons is becoming dissociated from the irreversible temporality of human life.<sup>38</sup>

It is necessary to "prevent capitalism from rotting the planet" to quote the title of a dossier published in issue 119 of *Éléments*, published in winter 2005/2006. It is interesting to note that Benoist has not written anything about ecology since the mid-1990s, almost 25 years ago. Since then, he has been content to compile and reprint the articles cited above. In the early 2000s, he also developed an interest in other environmental and anti-globalization activists whose positions were close to those of Edward "Teddy" Goldsmith, a philosopher of ecology and founder, in 1969, of the journal *The Ecologist*, one of the oldest ecological journals to have a French version. Benoist also became interested in the work of the American Peter Berg, a disciple of Goldsmith's and a key figure in Californian eco-counterculture who inspired by Goldsmith's pagan<sup>39</sup> and differentialist arguments, and who coined the concept of "bioregionalism."<sup>40</sup> The concept of bioregionalism is somewhat in keeping with GRECE's promotion in the 1970s of deep-rooted regionalism, which Benoist adopted in the early 2000s. Since then, he has devoted his work into a critique of globalization in connection with a far-right theorization of de-growth.

### **National-Revolutionary Movements, the National Front, and Socio-Ecology**

During the 1990s, members of the nationalist-revolutionary group Nouvelle Résistance (New resistance)—an "Third Way" organization born in 1991 and led by an old hand of revolutionary nationalism, Christian Bouchet—engaged in a policy of infiltration into classical ecological organizations. They became card-carrying members of the young *Mouvement Écologiste Indépendant* (Independent Ecological Movement, founded in 1994) of Antoine Waechter (a historical leader of the French political environmentalism), which refused to align itself politically and advocated for a Europe of regions. Nouvelle Résistance activists quietly joined the Greens from 1994, and took control of the French section of *Earth First!*, a radical U.S. environmentalist group. Nouvelle Résistance leaders placed a high priority on infiltration. This strategy was not unique to France. Various national parties had adopted similar policies on a European scale: in Germany, Poland, Great

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<sup>38</sup> Robert de Herte [Alain de Benoist], "La Nécessaire Rupture," p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Goldsmith is the author of the first bioregionalist book: Edward Goldsmith (ed. by Peter Berg & Raymond F. Dassmann), *Reinhabiting a Separate Country: A Bioregional Anthology of Northern California* (San Francisco: Planet Drum Foundation, 1978).

<sup>40</sup> Bioregionalism was born in the United States in the 1970s. The idea of the nation-state has been abandoned in this discourse in favor of local communities. The theorists of bioregionalism promote the principle of subsidiarity and reject the political, economic, scientific, and industrial forms of modernity stemming from the Enlightenment. Bioregionalists believe that cultures, the economy, and communities are rooted in a restricted geographical region ("land" or "carnal fatherland"), whose biotope must be protected, by maintaining natural landscapes and cultural particularities as much as possible. Their economic model subscribes to the ideal of self-sufficiency, although trade with others is permitted. These theorists place great importance on the *longue durée*.

Britain, Spain, and Italy. Between 1994 and its disappearance in 1996 (when it merged into Unité Radicale, Radical Unity) Nouvelle Résistance had a very left-wing approach to policy, and sought to establish links with left-wing and even far-left groups, copying Eichberg's example.

The environmentalist ideas of the New Right were taken up by other far-right tendencies, the most important of which has been the National Front, NF. The subject of environmentalism began to appear in NF programs in the early 1990s and, under the impetus of Bruno Mégret, the number two of this party at that time, took on identity-politics overtones. For Mégret, the point was to give new direction to the National Front by demonstrating its concern with environmental conservation. The topic of environmentalism first emerged at a National Front convention held in Nice. It was, however, understood in a purely identity-politics sense: for the NF leaders, being an "ecologist" meant wanting to preserve the environment to enable the survival and development of the living species. From the mid-1990s, Bruno Megret increasingly opposed Jean-Marie Le Pen and then left the party, followed by a large number of party executives. Following the Mégret-led split, the topic was set aside. Even as recently as 2010, Jean-Marie Le Pen, a firm believer in a tradition of economic liberalism, even of ultra-liberalism, considered environmentalism to be a "bobo" pastime.

The National Front/Rally's interest in environmentalism is therefore quite recent: its presidential campaign platform for 2012 was silent on this issue. Not even Laurent Ozon's longtime presence in the party changed things. Ozon was an environmentalist and militant of the identity-politics far right who served in the party's governing bodies and as an ephemeral advisor to Marine Le Pen in 2011. Indeed, on January 16, 2011, at the end of the party's convention in Tours, Marine Le Pen appointed him to the position of national delegate for training and a member of the investiture commission in charge of steering the Presidential Action Committee on Ecology. He resigned from the NF after he defended the massacre perpetrated in Norway by Anders Behring Breiviks in August of the same year.

Indeed, Ozon is an identity-politics activist in favor of repatriation, and hails from the ranks of the New Right: in particular, he participated in the summer "university" of GRECE (in fact theoretical training courses organized for GRECE executives) in 1998. Between 1994 and 2000, he edited *Le recours aux forêts* (Back to the forests), the journal of his Nouvelle Écologie (New Ecology) association. Ozon was also a member of Antoine Waechter's party. Towards the middle of 1998, the leaders of the Independent Ecological Movement appointed him communications manager for the 1999 European Women's Campaign, and he brought with him Marjorie Naisbit, the wife of one of GRECE's leaders. Finally, he was close, like Benoist, to Teddy Goldsmith. Ozon even edited a series for the environmentalist publisher Le Sang de la Terre (Blood of the Earth), a well-known publishing house in this field.

Since then, he has shifted towards a "hard" identity-politics approach, condemning immigration in the name of the white race: the approach to socio-ecology he promotes is ethnic and localist. He has thus sought to denounce so-called colonization immigration, the consequence of which he alleges is Europe-wide ethnic, not to say racial, replacement. In October 2009, Laurent Ozon and his association La Maison Commune (Common House) took part in the Identitarian Convention organized in Orange, a town in southeast France. In 2014, he created the Mouvement pour la Remigration (The Repatriation Movement). He is not alone in his expressing a very particular form of anti-modern, pagan, and racist socio-ecology.

We find similar ideas in former GRECE member Gilbert Sincyr, who was also a member of the Société pour la Protection de la Nature dans le Sud-Ouest, and the Cousteau Foundation, a non-governmental organization founded by Commander Jacques-Yves Cousteau to preserve marine fauna and flora. This

form of ecology is distinguished from mainstream political environmentalism by a narrative that is openly contemptuous of left-wing environmentalism. For example, the late identity-politics activist and former GRECE member Guillaume Faye saw members of the Green Party as “professional imposters,” and as “a screen that conceals Trotskyist cosmopolitan ideas.”<sup>41</sup> In the same vein, Jean Haudry, a leader of the group Terre et Peuple and also a former GRECE member, describes environmentalists as “eco-KGB agents” and the “green plague.”<sup>42</sup> The Belgian folklorist Bernard Mengal sees in them “pseudo-environmentalist movements notoriously infiltrated by neo-Bolshevik cliques.”<sup>43</sup>

We also find these ideas in the magazine *Réfléchir & Agir* which, taking up the identity-politics positions to have emerged from the New Right, presents itself as a defender of European civilization. Adopting the racialism expressed by the *völkisch* dissidents of GRECE, it supports the idea of a large white European grouping from Paris to Vladivostok, with “European socialist” and pagan ideals.<sup>44</sup> The idea of a great white continental block is a legacy both of Nazism and certain nationalist European theorists, such as Jean Thiriart, whose book, *Un Empire de quatre cents millions d’hommes, l’Europe* (Europe, an empire of 400 million) is an important milestone for the New Right.<sup>45</sup> The tone of *Réfléchir & Agir* is particularly violent and racist, with anti-Semitic overtones.<sup>46</sup> A significant number of past members of the New Right have participated in it such as Guillaume Faye, Pierre Vial, Jean Mabire, Jean Haudry, Alain de Benoist, etc.

*Réfléchir & Agir* calls the French environmentalist public figures Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Nicolas Hulot, and the photographer Yann-Artus Bertrand “eco-posers.”<sup>47</sup> According to this publication, the Greens have betrayed the environmentalist cause:

Under cover of an environmentalism whose name they have usurped (they are often environmentalists from the city who fantasize about nature but do not know its laws), we knew about their blubbery Third Worldism, their obsessive anti-racism, and their psychopathological antifascism. Well today they put this ideological base at the exclusive service of green capitalism, the new tool of globalism, for which they serve as its moral and political guarantor. Their environmentalism now goes along with finance like a bespoke glove on a beautiful hand, since their credo is to adapt the planet and, if necessary, people, to the needs of the capitalist economy.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Guillaume Faye, *Pourquoi nous combattons: Manifeste de la Résistance européenne* (Paris: L’Aencre, 2001), p. 104.

<sup>42</sup> Jean Haudry, “De la quête à la reconquête,” in Collectif, *Liber Amicorum Alain de Benoist* (Paris: Les Amis d’Alain de Benoist, 2004), p. 110.

<sup>43</sup> “Interview with Bernard Mengal,” *Hammer against Cross* (1994), p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> See Stéphane François, *Au-delà des vents du Nord. L’extrême droite française, le Pôle nord et les Indo-Européens* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2014).

<sup>45</sup> Stéphane François, *Au-delà des vents du Nord*.

<sup>46</sup> For example, this magazine supports some Holocaust deniers like the Swiss Gaston Armand Amaudruz, and French, Jean Plantin, a publisher, and Olivier Mathieu, a Belgian writer.

<sup>47</sup> Unsigned, “Les ‘Verts’ fourriers du nouveau capitalisme,” *Réfléchir & Agir*, no. 33 (fall 2009), p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> Unsigned, “Les ‘Verts’ fourriers du nouveau capitalisme,” p. 9.

## The theoretical puzzle of far-right socio-ecology

### A Fundamentally Identity-Politics-Driven Socio-Ecology

The identitarian movement wants Europe to be reconstituted along ethnic, regionalist, federalist, and even, for the most radical among them, neopagan lines. It promotes the existence of a European cultural and ethnic identity and, by extension, the idea of a white race, heir to both the Indo-European prehistoric peoples and the cultures of antiquity. The spectrum of organizations promoting these ideas ranges from neo-Nazis to members of the New Right and their peers, the unalloyed identitarians. Identity politics is also present in the United States, where it is represented by “alt-right” groups, white nationalists, and white supremacists. They all reject the nationalism of traditional far-right parties in Europe, but this does not prevent them from playing the conventional political game: see, for example, the role of the Lega in Italy,<sup>49</sup> or the infiltration of the National Front by Identitarians.

As I have shown in other works,<sup>50</sup> GRECE and its dissidents ought to be seen as the first theorists of the ideology known today as “identitarian.” Indeed, while identitarianism may have two political organizations as precursors (René Binet’s New European Order in the 1950s, or Dominique Venner’s Europe-Action in the following decade), it was GRECE that, from the 1970s onwards, came up with the idea of an ethnically and religiously constituted European civilization stretching back to time immemorial (that is, Indo-European paganism), which was to be protected from American colonialism. Its most radical elements also insisted on “ethnic affirmation,” deeming that this civilization is suffering slow genocidal destruction because of the arrival of immigrants, perceived as a form of reverse colonization. Such individuals left GRECE in the 1980s and spread their socio-ecological ideas among other far-right undercurrents.

I identify four key characteristics that help define identity-politics-driven socio-ecology: 1) It is driven by identity politics in the sense that it promotes European civilization and ethnic origins, whose sources must be found and whose continued cultural and ethnic existence must be protected. A bumper sticker from the association Terre & Peuple neatly develops this idea: its message simply reads, “The white man is on the verge of extinction: 1900 20%, 2000 8%, 2050 5% (of world population). Let’s preserve (bio)diversity.” It is also focused on ideas of rootedness: at issue for it is the preservation of local and regional particularities of the great Indo-European ethno-cultural complex. Difference is accepted within the framework of an ethnic, historical, and religious unity. 2) It claims to be pagan. Since Christianity is said to have undermined the cosmic harmony of Man and Nature that is characteristic of Indo-European pagan religions, the Christian parenthesis must be closed. However, since 2010, we have witnessed Christianity’s return to grace through the elaboration of a Christian environmentalism that is both anti-modern and anti-miscegenation. 3) It desires to be anti-miscegenationist: the “true” ecology would be an ecology of populations. In order to preserve biotopes (read: ethnospheres), we must reject both the settlement of immigrant (allogeneic) populations and crossbreeding on European soil. 4) It presents itself as localist, such as consuming local products. Behind its promotion of associations for the maintenance of peasant agriculture (*Associations pour le maintien d’une agriculture paysanne*: AMAP) and other such maneuvers, it aims more broadly to promote a form of autarchy on a continental scale in keeping with national-revolutionary theories. It rejects economic globalization and the homogenization of

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<sup>49</sup> “The League,” formerly the Lega Nord, or “Northern League.”

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Stéphane François, *La Nouvelle Droite et ses dissidences. Identité, écologie et paganisme* (Lormont: Le Bord de l’eau, 2021).

cultural practices. However, it must be made clear that this last point is not specific to identity-politics ecology: all the various currents within environmentalist movements have some share in it.

These characteristics are broad enough to cover different groups and ideologies. The ideas presented are developed by Les Identitaires (the new name of the extra-parliamentary organization Bloc Identitaire), by *Terre & Peuple* magazine and the journal *Réfléchir & Agir*, by what remains of the New Right, and even by people claiming to adhere to National Socialism, such as the Italianist translator Philippe Baillet, a former GRECE member.<sup>51</sup> Today, these extreme right-wing movements are hybridizing with other environmentalist trends, on issues such as localism, anti-globalization<sup>52</sup> rejection of technology, etc. This form of environmentalism is far from being a fad or a strategic use: on the contrary, it is a fundamental point in their political thinking.

*Terre & Peuple* was founded by three old activists from the New Right: Pierre Vial, Jean Haudry, and Jean Mabire. Inspired by National Socialism, they promoted the idea of “ethnopolitics”—that is, the idea of making policy based on ethnic affirmation and a rejection of the “white genocide.”<sup>53</sup> Interest in this form of politics was aroused by the translation of the American Greg Johnson’s *White Nationalism* as well as by the translation of the South African Arthur Kemp’s *What is Ethnonationalism?*<sup>54</sup>

This current is characterized by the following features: a rejection of the megalopolis in favor of life in village communities;<sup>55</sup> a praise and defense of regional particularism;<sup>56</sup> an taste for folk activities, often of a pagan nature (celebration of the summer solstice, the Christmas tree, vigils, the May tree, regional costumes, etc.);<sup>57</sup> a praise of nudism and natural medicines; a rejection of universalist Christianity, which destroys local cultural practices; a promotion of regionalism; and a rejection of crossbreeding in the name of preserving identities. It therefore promotes a way of life that is autarchic, anti-modern, respects regional and folk identities, etc., which, in a sense, borders on “bio-regionalism,”<sup>58</sup> to say nothing of biological racism. All these characteristics are to be found in American pagan and Nordic enthusiast communities.<sup>59</sup>

Since the mid-1980s identitarian networks have called for a return of non-European immigrants in the name of the right to difference and to one’s cultural identity. Indeed, the revolutionary-

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<sup>51</sup> Philippe Baillet and Giovanni Monastra, *Piété pour le Cosmos* (Saint-Genis-Laval: Akribeia, 2017).

<sup>52</sup> For example, see the special on “Une réponse à la mondialisation, le localisme,” *Éléments*, no. 100 (March 2001); “Être gaulois à l’ère de la mondialisation,” *Terre & Peuple*, 29 (Fall 2006); “Mondialisme: Le mal absolu,” *Terre & Peuple*, no. 44 (summer 2010); “Tsunami mondialiste sur l’Europe,” *Réfléchir & Agir*, no. 48 (fall 2014), etc.

<sup>53</sup> “Ethnopolitique, la voie du réel,” *Terre & Peuple*, no. 33 (fall 2007). In 2017, this theme was taken up in a dossier in *Réfléchir & Agir*, “Qu’est-ce que le nationalisme blanc ?” no. 55 (winter 2017).

<sup>54</sup> Greg Johnson, *Le Nationalisme blanc: Interrogations et définitions* (Saint-Genis-Laval: Akribeia, 2017); Arthur Kemp, *Qu’est-ce que l’ethnonationalisme?* (Saint-Genis-Laval: Akribeia, 2016).

<sup>55</sup> “Fuir la ville?” *Terre & Peuple*, no. 51 (spring 2012).

<sup>56</sup> “Nos patries charnelles,” *Terre & Peuple*, no. 48 (summer 2011).

<sup>57</sup> Pierre Vial, *Rites païens du berceau à la tombe* (Forcalquier: Éditions de la forêt, undated); Pierre Vial, *Fêtes païennes des quatre saisons* (Forcalquier: Éditions de la forêt, undated).

<sup>58</sup> See the dossier, “Une réponse au mondialisme, le localisme,” *Éléments*, no. 100 (March 2001): pp. 16–32; Alain de Benoist and Charles Champetier, *Manifeste pour une renaissance européenne: À la découverte du GRECE—Son histoire, ses idées, son organisation*, Paris: GRECE, 2000), and its slogan, “For local communities, against gigantism,” pp. 87–89.

<sup>59</sup> Matthias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* (Durham, N. Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003).

conservative activist Guillaume Faye did not hesitate to write in 1984: “to take the right to difference as far as it can go it is necessary to reject a multiracial society and to envisage the return of immigrants to their countries.”<sup>60</sup> According to him, a multiracial society is multiracist. However, Faye’s words smack strongly of racism, however toned-down its expression. Today, Benoist does not hesitate to agree wholeheartedly with this, stating:

When immigration exceeds a certain threshold, it inevitably becomes colonization, in the primary sense of the term. I have always condemned colonialism, and cannot accept today a colonization in the opposite direction. I do not condemn this excessively massive immigration out of chauvinism or xenophobia, but because I see it as a forced uprooting whose only beneficiary is employers. Immigration is the reserve army of capital.<sup>61</sup>

In 2009 (but his position has not changed since) “Eugène Krampon” (pseudonym of Éric Fornal, a French skinhead) published an article titled “Towards the Greater Europe of Ethnic Groups (the Position of *Réfléchir & Agir*),” in which he took up the ethno-regionalist credo of some of the extreme right-wing regionalists he quotes: the Breton nationalists Olier Mordrel (pseudonym of Olivier Mordrelle), Yann Fouéré and Goulven Pennaod, Burgundy regionalist and pro-Nazi Johannès Thomasset, and the Norman regionalist and SS nostalgic writer Jean Mabire, alongside the inevitable former French SS officers Robert Dun and Saint-Loup (pseudonym of the French SS, journalist and writer Marc Augier). According to him, regional diversity must be part of a broader framework of continental European federalism, allowing the defense of the European white race.

## A Neopagan Environmentalism

Long confined to the neo-Nazi, New Right, or identity-politics fringes, neopaganism became an important form of spirituality for the far right globally from the second half of the 1980s onwards. This neopagan current can be divided into two main sub-categories: 1) on the one hand, a philosophical neopaganism, whose worldview derives not from a monotheistic conception of the world, but instead from the philosophers of antiquity or their contemporary heirs, such as Heidegger, who is said to have invented “an original form of neopaganism that relies on the pre-Socratics to eliminate all Judaic or Romanized references, and which allows him to state that, “The forced renunciation of the ancient gods, [and] the endurance of this renunciation are the safeguard of their divinity.”<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, a religious neopaganism whose worldview revolves around the desire to recreate religions out of Indo-European antiquity.

In the United States, extreme right-wing neopaganism exceeds in numbers and influence local Nazi groups and radical fringes of the Ku Klux Klan. In 2003, about 50% of the followers of Nordic paganism in the US were right-wing extremists, especially those in prison, who often advocated the superiority of the Aryan race, anti-Semitism, racism, and Holocaust denial.<sup>63</sup> Despite extensive research, I have not been able to obtain an accurate estimate of the number of practicing neopagans in the US, but it is conservatively possible to claim their numbers at around 100,000. According to

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<sup>60</sup> Guillaume Faye, “La société multiraciale en question,” *Éléments*, 48-49 (winter 1983/1984), pp. 73–76.

<sup>61</sup> Alain de Benoist, “Alain de Benoist parle aux fils et filles de France,” Fils de France website, <http://www.filsdefrance.fr/breves/alain-de-benoist-parle-aux-fils-et-aux-filles-de-france-2/>, accessed November 25, 2012.

<sup>62</sup> François Rastier, *Heidegger, Messie antisémitisme: Ce que révèlent Les Cahiers noirs* (Lormont: Le Bord de l’eau, 2018), p. 113; F. Rastier cites Heidegger’s text : *Hölderlins Hymnen: “Germanien” und “Der Rhein”* (GA 39, p. 95).

<sup>63</sup> Stéphane François, *L’Occultisme nazi. Entre la SS et l’ésotérisme* (Paris : CNRS Éditions, 2020), pp. 181-183.

the Pew Research Center, approximately 0.3% of the US population identified as pagan or Wiccan in 2014, divided between nationally or even internationally structured and federated groups, and so-called “wild” practice, which was attributable to a few individuals standing outside any institutional framework.<sup>64</sup>

In France, the theorization of neopaganism essentially came out of GRECE toward the end of the 1960s. In the 1970s, GRECE wanted, according to the admission of one of its founding members, Pierre Vial, to create a “new culture” with its own normative standards.<sup>65</sup> Neopaganism and its supposed values were important elements of this “new culture,” added to which were notions of European identity and Indo-European themes. Neopaganism thus played an important role in GRECE’s doctrinal evolution. As the New Right activist Jacques Marlaud wrote, “to speak of paganism in the 20th century is to assume that there is a relatively coherent current of thought to which this name can be attributed.”<sup>66</sup>

The topic of neopaganism has been the subject of several publications (articles, reviews, and books) by New Right activists. The year 2019 proved no different, as is shown by the recent publication of two issues of *Krisis* around this question,<sup>67</sup> as well as a dossier.<sup>68</sup> From its inception, the New Right has used the terms “tradition” and “Indo-European” explicitly to refer to a return to favor of paganism. Indeed, pagan traditions had in fact continued in the French countryside until at least the Counter-Reformation, if not the 19th century.<sup>69</sup> Some of these traditions have an aspect we would describe today as “environmentalist.” For these activists, this means that the peoples of Europe have continued to have a monistic vision of ecology. As a result, the shift toward environmentalism has been undertaken as part of a doctrinal posture inspired by Ancient times.

In France, neopagan discourses long remained mostly confined to Breton or Norman regionalist circles. Then, in the early 1970s, the New Right used these to justify inegalitarianism (Christianity becoming a “Bolshevism of antiquity”), elitism, and differentialism. In 1981 de Benoist published *Comment peut-on être païen?* (How can one be pagan?),<sup>70</sup> which relaunched the theme among far-right circles. Subsequently, neopaganism also developed in other far-right currents. The Italian historian Francesco Germinario rightly says that the pagan question and the critique of religious universalism constitute the main thread of New Right rhetoric.<sup>71</sup> This neopaganism developed the idea of the Christian origin of our climatic, technological, and civilizational crises.

Among New Right and the identity-politics activists, the work of Guillaume Faye stands out. In an article from 1982 published in *Nouvelle École*,<sup>72</sup> he professed that Heidegger’s philosophy allows not

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<sup>64</sup> “Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics,” Pew Research Center, September 30, 2014, Accessed July 29, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/>.

<sup>65</sup> Pierre Vial, *Une Terre, un Peuple*, p. 51.

<sup>66</sup> Jacques Marlaud, *Le Renouveau païen dans la pensée française* (Paris: Le Livre-club du labyrinthe, 1987), p. 19.

<sup>67</sup> no. 36 in 2012 (“Monotheism ?/Polytheism?”) and no. 47 in 2017 (“Paganism?”).

<sup>68</sup> “The Polytheistic Response,” in number 167 of *Éléments* from summer 2017.

<sup>69</sup> Arnold Van Gennep, *Le Folklore français* (Paris : Robert Laffont, 1999).

<sup>70</sup> Alain de Benoist, *Comment Peut-On Être Païen?* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1981), republished under the title: *Comment peut-on être païen?: Un recours aux racines—Une spiritualité pour notre temps* (Paris: Avatar Éditions, 2009).

<sup>71</sup> Francesco Germinario, *La Destra degli dei: Alain de Benoist e la cultura politica della Nouvelle Droite* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2002).

<sup>72</sup> Guillaume Faye, “Heidegger et la question du dépassement du christianisme,” *Nouvelle École*, no. 39 (1982): pp. 67–72.



only for the overcoming of Christianity, but also the possibility of returning to a form of paganism, which he qualifies as “historical” and post-Christian. Faye also took up the Heideggerian idea of the Christian origin of rational modernity. Extreme right-wing socio-ecologists, in agreement on this point with the radical environmentalists, wish to transform the defense of nature into a kind of “sacred duty” that would go hand in hand with the acceptance of ecological transcendence. This conception of ecology may be qualified as spiritualist, as forming an imperative for human activity. Its pantheist aspect allows it to propose a re-enchantment of the world, or even a new cosmology. In this type of discourse, transcendence no longer emanates from God, or the divine, but from “Nature.” It is this conception of the world and ecology that interested de Benoist.

Extreme right-wing socio-ecologists have also taken up the postulates articulated by Mircea Eliade, another influential thinker in this area: “In religions of the cosmic type, religious life consists precisely in exalting man’s solidarity with life and nature.”<sup>73</sup> Such a system recognizes the “living” character of nature. It also recognizes the existence of predestined “sacred” places, propitious for the celebration of cults. Moreover, its cyclical conception of time forces people to bring themselves into harmony with the world. From this perspective, which is not anthropocentric, the Earth and the Universe are perceived as a great harmonious whole with which humans are associated by their very being. Endorsing this conception, de Benoist asserts that “Ecology is obviously very close to paganism, because of its global approach to environmental problems, the importance it gives to the relationship between humans and the world, and also of course because of its criticism of the devastation of the Earth wrought by the obsession with productivity, the ideology of progress, and its technical framing.”<sup>74</sup>

This influence can also be found in the *GRECE Manifesto* published in 2000, largely written by Alain de Benoist and Charles Champetier, which endorses “an integral environmentalism, against the productivity-obsessed demon,” which “must also call for the overcoming of modern anthropocentrism and the awareness of the co-belonging of man and the cosmos.”<sup>75</sup> For, they continue, “this immanent transcendence makes nature a partner, not an adversary or an object. It does not erase the specificity of man, but denies him the exclusive place that Christianity and classical humanism had attributed to him. To economic *hubris* and technical Prometheanism, it responds with the sense of measure and the search for harmony.”<sup>76</sup>

Faithful to its anti-Christianity, the New Right sees the origins of ecological disaster in the Bible, referring to an argument made by the medievalist, historian of techniques, and pioneer of political environmentalism Lynn White Jr. in an article from 1967, translated and published in Benoist’s journal *Krisis* in 1993:

Christianity inherited from Judaism not only the conception of a linear, non-repeating time, but also an impressive account of the creation of the world [...] God designed all this explicitly for the benefit of humankind and to enable it to have its law reign: there is nothing in the physical world resulting from creation that has any other reason for existence than to serve human ends [...] Christianity, especially in its Western form, is the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever known [...], in absolute opposition to ancient paganism as well as to the religions of Asia (with the possible exception of Zoroastrianism), it establishes a dualism between man and nature, but it

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<sup>73</sup> Mircea Eliade, *La Nostalgie des origines: Méthodologie et histoire des religions* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 112.

<sup>74</sup> “Comment peut-on être païen? Entretien avec Alain de Benoist,” *Élément*, 89 (July 1997), p. 13.

<sup>75</sup> GRECE, *Manifeste pour une renaissance européenne*, p. 92.

<sup>76</sup> GRECE, *Manifeste pour une renaissance européenne*, p. 92.

also insists on the fact that the exploitation of nature by man, to satisfy his own ends, results from God's will.<sup>77</sup>

The historian and sociologist Pierre Bérard, a GRECE founding member, also defends this argument by recalling that in the world of the Bible, the enslavement of desacralized nature is a duty that is part of the divine plan. This view is also defended by the former president of GRECE, Jacques Marlaud.<sup>78</sup> Many more examples could be given. However, de Benoist, who is suspicious of neopagan pantheism, warns against the confusion of certain pagans:

One can never repeat often enough, for example, that the ancient Indo-European paganism has never been reduced to a simple "nature religion" (it cannot be thought of outside nature, but it cannot be reduced to naturalism) and that, moreover, the cult of Mother Earth belongs to another tradition than its own (a telluric, Chthonian tradition, which it has to a large extent supplanted). In this sense, the resacralization of nature advocated by some environmentalists refers less to the sacred "classical" pagan than to a hermetic tradition emphasizing above all the link between man and nature, the microcosm and the macrocosm [...].<sup>79</sup>

Benoist thus radically distances himself from the neopagan practitioners of the New Right in favor of an anti-modern and anti-capitalist conception of environmentalism.

## Rejection of Eugenics, Technology, and Biotechnology

The various currents within the far right have developed particular conceptions of environmentalism that may also overlap, such as a double rejection of the Enlightenment.<sup>80</sup> It is rejected, firstly, as a philosophical system that gave rise to liberalism (economic, political, philosophical), and, secondly, as a rational system that serves as the origin of contemporary rationalism. This double rejection thus gets expressed in the denouncing of both technological and societal progressivism. I approach the critique of the Enlightenment here from two angles: firstly, that of technophobia, taken as resistance to technology; and, secondly, that of anti-modernity.

According to these activists, the fetish for technology and scientific discoveries has cut humankind off from the benefits of Nature, so goes the argument: this occurred specifically with the departure brought about by Cartesianism in the 17th century, which desecralized nature and transformed the animal into a sort of living machine, devoid of feeling, spirit, or intelligence.<sup>81</sup> Thus, according to Frédéric Dufoing, a Belgian Christian academic with close links to the New Right: "More or less, the ideological worldview that nourishes environmentalism is constituted against the values of the Enlightenment, i.e., against the optimistic belief in cumulative and unilinear progress, technology, mechanics (and the 'mechanistic' metaphor of nature inherited from Descartes and Newton), Reason, science, statist civilization, etc."<sup>82</sup> The men of the 17th century supposedly laid the groundwork for

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<sup>77</sup> Lynn White Jr., "Les racines historiques de notre crise écologique," *Krisis*, no. 15 (September 1993), pp. 66–67.

<sup>78</sup> Jacques Marlaud, "Introduction à la religion européenne de la nature," *Interpellations* (Paris: Dualpha, 2004): pp. 410–412.

<sup>79</sup> Alain de Benoist, "Écologie et religion," *Éléments*, no. 79 (January 1994), p. 18.

<sup>80</sup> See, for example, "Les Lumières," *Nouvelle École*, no. 65 (2016), written in a very hostile tone.

<sup>81</sup> It should be emphasized that, even if the extreme right claims it, this is not a faithful reading of Descartes' philosophy of knowledge in his *Discourse on Method*, but a misguided interpretation.

<sup>82</sup> Frédéric Dufoing, *L'Écologie radicale* (Gollion: Infolio, 2012), p. 21.

bringing us into the technical era, in which we are allegedly still living: “Bacon, Newton, Descartes, Galileo, and many others contributed to transforming the earth, nature, into a submissive, manipulable, quantifiable, predictable object that no longer has anything to do with the way man conceives of himself. The deities are succeeded by a conception of nature metaphorically conceived as a clock, a mechanism.”<sup>83</sup>

In this sense, the far right’s recourse to environmentalism allows the “ideology of progress” to be rejected without having to take up the old counter-revolutionary refrains. Alain de Benoist, under the pseudonym of Robert de Herte, noted this in 1994 in an editorial in *Éléments*, “La fin de l’idéologie du progrès” (The end of the ideology of progress).<sup>84</sup> This rejection of progressivism is a reversal of the values of the New Right, which had praised “European Prometheanism”<sup>85</sup> around the turn of the millennium. Writing under pseudonym, de Benoist claims that:

environmentalists retain from “nature” only those aspects of “nature” which they dreamed up and which correspond to their desire. The same people who urge us to return to “nature” are also those who reject such elementary facts of nature as selection, inequality, hierarchy—claiming that these notions, which are proper to every living system, cannot be extrapolated to the human environment. And they are also the same people who claim that we can, at will, modify human beings by acting on their environment—and thereby disengage them from “pseudo-biological destinies.” The environmental movement thus succeeds in its tour de force of falling at the same time into the error of belief in the omnipotence of the environment, and into the “ultra-naturalist” errors of biological materialism.<sup>86</sup>

De Benoist has also maintained that “environmentalism marks the end of the ideology of progress: the future, henceforth, is more a source of concern than of promise. By the same token, social projects can no longer be the result of an optimistic expectation of ‘a brighter tomorrow,’ but call for a meditation on the teachings of the present as well as those of the past.”<sup>87</sup> Indeed, a succession of large-scale industrial disasters (Seveso, Bhopal, Chernobyl, Minamata) has mortgaged the confidence of Westerners in the “ideology of progress,” the radiant future being transformed into one darkened by the perils to come, with the risks of scientific and industrial slip-ups multiplying. In the same movement, the Western model of development, based on the intensive and extensive exploitation of resources, has been denounced as a means of destroying the planet, global warming being a case in point. For the New Right, it is necessary not only to become aware of the environmental issues, but also to denounce capitalism. An *Éléments* dossier proposed for instance to “prevent capitalism from rotting the planet.”<sup>88</sup> Since then, de Benoist has since become an ardent defender of the theory of degrowth, and thus endorses both a sort of frugality and deglobalization,<sup>89</sup> the latter being analyzed as a form of decolonization from the United States.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Dufoing, *L’Écologie radicale*, pp. 66–67.

<sup>84</sup> Robert de Herte [Alain de Benoist], “La fin de l’idéologie du progrès,” *Éléments*, no. 79 (January 1994), p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> From the character of Greek mythology, Prometheus. This neologism refers to the idea of unlimited technical development.

<sup>86</sup> Robert de Herte [Alain de Benoist], “Les équivoques de l’écologie,” *Éléments*, n°21–22, (summer 1977), republished in Pierre Vial (ed.), *Pour une renaissance culturelle* (Paris: Copernic, 1979), p. 75.

<sup>87</sup> Herte [Benoist], “La fin de l’idéologie du progrès,” p. 3.

<sup>88</sup> *Éléments*, no. 199 (winter 2005–2006).

<sup>89</sup> See the dossier, “Pourquoi les élites ne veulent surtout pas de la démondialisation,” *Éléments*, no. 150 (January 2014): pp. 46–62.

<sup>90</sup> Alain de Benoist, “La mondialisation comme idéologie,” *Éléments*, no. 150 (January 2014), pp. 55–56.

This ideological development is consistent with a strong interest in Martin Heidegger as a counter to progress and technology. *Nouvelle École* published several translations from the German philosopher in the 1980s. Far from original, the Heideggerian anti-technological position can be found among other theorists of the Conservative Revolution's nationalist-revolutionaries (the New Right's intellectual point of reference) and European identity-politics activists. The critique of technology is also present, albeit more discreetly, in the work of both Ernst Jünger and Oswald Spengler (though Jeffrey Herf sees them as praising technology),<sup>91</sup> in the *völkisch* movement, and, finally, in that of the National-Bolshevist Ernst Niekisch, who condemned what he called "man-eating technology."<sup>92</sup>

As Stefan Breuer writes in his *Anatomie de la Révolution conservatrice*: "Has not the process of civilization long ago devoured, in addition to the earth's crust, the human heart? Has not the Promethean spirit of its own accord cut the umbilical cord that attached humans to the nourishing earth?"<sup>93</sup> The issue here is thus about reconnecting to the Earth and turning one's back on progress. However, some inconsistencies emerge: de Benoist has never concealed his sympathy for paganism and his penchant for all things Nordic. He thus acknowledges, under the pseudonym Robert de Herte, that "the men of the North could only create their cultures by confronting a hostile environment. They have sometimes been left with the idea that human existence is that which opposes the world, and that in order to triumph over possible obstacles it is necessary to have constant recourse to technological rationality. The world of generalized industrialization, of growth at all costs, of mechanical efficiency, of technological calculation, of rational hygiene, is a world that has taken shape in the North. Individualism, too, today comes from this North [...]."<sup>94</sup> Paradoxically, then, the modernity that is so reviled originates from the North ...

The condemnation of technology and its ravages is easily discernible in the technophobic rhetoric of extreme right-wing socio-political ecology.<sup>95</sup> The *GRECE Manifesto* condemns "economic hubris and technical Prometheism,"<sup>96</sup> confirming the reversal of Promethean positions supported in the 1970s. Along these same lines, Thibault Isabel, *Krisis's* editor-in-chief and kingpin from 2005 to 2018,<sup>97</sup> has written that, "It is indeed in the idea of 'immoderation'—of 'hubris,' as the Greeks called it—that lies, in my opinion, the fundamental characteristic of modernity, or in any case what best allows us to distinguish operationally the 'modern' era from other periods of history."<sup>98</sup> On this basis, he has argued, it is imperative to turn our backs on this modernity marked by excess.

However, not all the intellectuals stemming from GRECE took this path. Guillaume Faye, for his part, remained attached to the Promethean conception of Europe civilization of the early years.<sup>99</sup> He specified that his paganism is "Promethean," and therefore "modern," because it is haunted by *hubris*. This Faustian "European mentality" is, he alleges, manifest in "the Cathedral of Reims, the triple revolution staircase of the Château de Chambord, the drawings of da Vinci, the comics of Liberatore

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<sup>91</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>92</sup> Stefan Breuer, *Anatomie de la Révolution conservatrice* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1996), p. 85.

<sup>93</sup> Breuer, *Anatomie de Révolution conservatrice*, pp. 83–84.

<sup>94</sup> Robert de Herte [Alain de Benoist], "La Méridienne," *Éléments*, 129 (summer 2008), p. 3.

<sup>95</sup> See, for example, the issues of *Krisis* devoted to modernity ("Modernité?" 44 [2016]) and to progress ("Progrès?" 45, [2016]).

<sup>96</sup> GRECE, *Manifeste pour une renaissance européenne*, p. 92.

<sup>97</sup> First under the pseudonym of Paul Masquelier (2005–2010), then under his real name.

<sup>98</sup> Thibault Isabel, *À bout de souffle: Études et entretiens sur l'épuisement du monde civilisé* (Lille: La Méduse, 2012), p. 46.

<sup>99</sup> Faye, *Pourquoi nous combattons*, p. 103.

and the Brussels school, or the design of Ferraris and the German-French-Swedish reactors of Ariane 5.”<sup>100</sup> In an interview he gave to the pagan Belgian magazine *Antaios*, he added:

Moreover, let us take the names of the American rockets or space programs from the time when von Braun named them: Thor, Atlas, Titan, Jupiter, Delta Mercury, Apollo ... None of them were called ‘Jesus,’ ‘Peace and Love,’ or ‘Bible.’ And this in a country where Christianity is, in fact, the state religion. Likewise, the European rocket is Ariane, the nuclear missiles of the French Army, Pluto and Hades, and those of the Indian Army, Agni. British warships traditionally bear names of the same origin: Hermes, Ajax, Hercules ... There is indeed a link, a mental thread between the reminiscences of pagan mythology and this ‘techno-science of power.’<sup>101</sup>

Faye also believes that “techno-science” must be associated with pagan thinking in order to meet the challenges of the future:

Thinking together, for the societies of the future, the advances of techno-science and the return to the traditional solutions from the mists of time. This is perhaps the true name of post-modernity, as far from being passé as it is from the idiotic cult of the “present.” To bring together, according to the logic of the *and*, not the *or*, the oldest memory and the Faustian soul, because they are in harmony. Intelligent traditionalism is the most powerful of futurisms and vice versa. Reconcile Evola and Marinetti. It is the concept of “modernity,” born of the ideology of the Enlightenment, that needs to be drained. We must not associate the Ancients with the Moderns, but the Ancients with the Futurists. Moreover, today, as the New Right has noted, the political and societal forms of modernity are cracking; archaic forms are resurfacing in all fields, not least the resurgence of Islam. Finally, the coming upheavals in techno-science—particularly in genetics—such as the tragic return to reality that is preparing for the 21st century will require a return to an archaic mentality. This is modernism, which has already become passé. But beware; it is not a question of succumbing to classical “traditionalism,” tainted with folklore and dreaming (behind it all) of a return to the past. Modernity has become obsolete. The future must be “archaic,” i.e. neither modern nor passé.<sup>102</sup>

Above all, unlike the radical environmentalists, whom he calls “naïve,” Faye does not think that nature is in danger.<sup>103</sup>

The New Right was not always hostile to the manipulation of life. In the 1970s, for example, GRECE endorsed eugenics. Indeed, *Éléments* published articles that amounted to discreet pleas for euthanasia and eugenics, and gave frank approval to the liberalization of abortion. We find this advocacy later on among the *völkisch*, even neo-Nazi, dissidents of the New Right, for whom abortion was a way to preserve the genetic heritage of the white elite, which had to protect its purity by eliminating “scum” and avoiding crossbreeding. Anti-miscegenation was fostered and largely adopted within the other trends on the French far right. *Nouvelle École* devoted a 1971 issue to eugenics, with illustrations quite representative of their preoccupations of the time: photographs of children, necessarily blond, are contrasted with others, representing handicapped people. Indeed,

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<sup>100</sup> Guillaume Faye, *L'Archéofuturisme* (Paris : L'Aencre, 1998), p. 31.

<sup>101</sup> “Les Titans et les Dieux : Entretien avec Guillaume Faye,” *Antaios*, 16 (spring 2001), p. 117.

<sup>102</sup> Faye, *L'Archéofuturisme*, 42–43.

<sup>103</sup> Guillaume Faye, *Les Extraterrestres de A à Z...* (Paris : Dualpha, 2003)

GRECE's publications at that time couple the racial argument with a championing of Darwinism. Subsequently, however, GRECE's interest would shift in the direction of biotechnology.

In the 2000s, the main author of articles on biotechnology was Charles Champetier, who, although he has been part of the environmentalist and "leftist" evolution of GRECE, remains fascinated by biopolitics, inequality, and questions of hereditary intelligence.<sup>104</sup> According to him, it is necessary to accept biotechnology in a critical way, without rejecting it wholesale.<sup>105</sup> In 2002, he created, together with Jean Laloux (a former editor-in-chief of *Krisis*), an online brand management company specialized in technological companies. He now devotes himself solely to research on biology, genetics, and biotechnology. His fascination with this field is not shared by de Benoist who, taking after Heidegger, stated in 2000 that "the human being is no longer the solution, but the problem."<sup>106</sup> However, in 2016, the debate on biotechnology and transhumanism was underscored anew in *Krisis*, which devoted an issue to the notion of "progress," bringing two views head to head: that of the Christian environmentalist Frédéric Dufoing who rejects it, and the more moderate view of Thibault Isabel, who would accept it under certain ethical conditions.<sup>107</sup>

## Against the Modern World

Part of the rejection of technology by the radical far right comes from the denunciation of the notion of "progress" itself. In the 1980s and 1990s, large segments of the far right rediscovered a spiritualist critique of progress, in the name of an occult "Tradition" to be restored:

The history of humanity, in other words, is interpreted as "metaphysical entropy," as a fall, degradation, decline from an original primordial state. All traditional authors see in contemporary times the time of the *Kali-Yuga*, that is to say, the culmination of the darkest age, the terminal phase of the cycle, the *ne plus ultra* of spiritual decline. The conflict between Tradition and anti-tradition crystalizes as decadence—and it is this decadence that the decadents call "progress." The opposition between traditional thought and the ideology of progress is thus total, and at the same time perfectly symmetrical (but inverted symmetry). Everything that modern consciousness analyzes and perceives as progress, the school interprets it as decline: the Renaissance is a fall, the philosophy of the Enlightenment a darkening.<sup>108</sup>

The modern world, born out of the Enlightenment, would then be only a manifestation of the spiritual decadence at work in Europe since the Renaissance—themes classic for René Guénon and Julius Evola for instance.

These anti-Enlightenment critiques have been taken up by Anglo-Saxon communitarian thinkers. Michael Walzer has written for instance that the liberal model pushes individuals to continually distance themselves from one another,<sup>109</sup> while William Pfaff is wont to argue that progress is a "dead

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<sup>104</sup> See the special issue devoted to "La révolution biotechnologique," *Éléments*, 97 (January 2000), in particular Charles Champetier, "Voici l'ère néobiotique," pp. 19–28, which anticipates transhumanism.

<sup>105</sup> Charles Champetier, "L'avenir de la biopolitique : Techniques du vivant dans une perspective évolutionnaire," *Krisis*, "Technique ?," no. 24 (November 2000): pp. 187–189.

<sup>106</sup> Robert de Herte [Alain de Benoist], "Misère de l'humanisme," *Éléments*, no. 97 (January 2000), p. 3.

<sup>107</sup> "Débat entre Frédéric Dufoing et Thibault Isabel: Faut-il avoir peur du transhumanisme ?" *Krisis*, no. 46, "Progrès ?" (September 2016): pp. 61–80.

<sup>108</sup> Unsigned article, "Présentation," *Krisis*, no. 3, "Tradition ?" (September 1989), pp. 7–8.

<sup>109</sup> Michael Walzer, "La critique communautarienne du libéralisme," in André Berten, Pablo da Silveira, and

idea.”<sup>110</sup> In 1994, Benoist took note of this in an article, “American Communitarians,” published in an issue of *Krisis*<sup>111</sup> given over to the study of communitarians, simply titled “Communauté?” This issue includes translations of Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, David Gross, Amy Guttmann, and Quentin Skinner, as well as texts by Claude Lévi-Strauss and ethnologist Robert Jaulin. Following this, *Éléments* published an article by Charles Champetier titled “Communitarians against Liberalism,”<sup>112</sup> and *Nouvelle École* published another article by Alasdair MacIntyre, “Politique, philosophie et bien commun” (a translation of his “Politics, Philosophy, and the Common Good”).<sup>113</sup>

The type of discourse at stake here is one in which the community becomes a possible form of overcoming a modernity *finissant*.<sup>114</sup> Communitarianism, it is argued, also makes it possible to arrest the dissolution of the social bond, a dissolution that, according to communitarian theorists, is characteristic of our individualistic era. This thinking amounts to a rejection of individualism, which is very prevalent on the anti-American far right. Indeed, the far right characterizes individualism as typical of a disengaged subject,<sup>115</sup> independent in relation to one’s fellows, insofar as one is bound to find in oneself one’s essential reasons for being. Individualism is thus analyzed as a form of atomism.<sup>116</sup> Benoist, for example, has been keenly interested in communitarian thought since the 1990s, and in 2015, wrote an important article titled “Irremplaçables Communautés” (irreplaceable communities).<sup>117</sup>

However, it must be pointed out that some of these communitarian theorists, notably Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer, are by no means closed to modernity, but instead are attentive observers of the singular features of certain “spheres of justice,” to use the latter’s expression.<sup>118</sup> Beyond this debate, the notion of community amounts, in some cases, to rehabilitating the carnal, concrete homelands so dear to the groups studied here. This notion of community also refers to social practices that are supposed to have disappeared: reciprocity, mutual aid, solidarity, shared values, etc.

This promotion of the myth of community and its return has enabled the mobilization of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon’s work. Proudhon is championed in order to justify the New Right’s federalism and localism. On the far right, such localism is associated with the idea of a self-sufficient community that “seeks to create the conditions for this self-sufficiency at all levels: extended or reconstituted families [in fact tribes or clans], neighborhood communities, cities or regions, local committees, inter-communal systems, ecosystems and local markets.”<sup>119</sup> According to Alain de Benoist, “The notion of

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Hervé Pourtois, *Libéraux et communautariens* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), p. 319.

<sup>110</sup> William Pfaff, “Du progrès: Réflexions sur une idée morte,” *Commentaire*, 74 (summer 1996): pp. 385–392.

<sup>111</sup> Alain de Benoist, “Communautariens américains,” *Krisis*, no. 16 (June 1994): 2–29. This text was republished under the title “Communautariens vs. libéraux” in Alain de Benoist *Critique: Théoriques* (Lausanne: L’Âge d’Homme, 2002), pp. 431–454.

<sup>112</sup> Charles Champetier, “Les communautariens contre le libéralisme,” *Éléments*, 88 (April 1997): pp. 30–34.

<sup>113</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, “Politique, philosophie et bien commun,” *Nouvelle École*, 55 (2005): pp. 133–144.

<sup>114</sup> In 2015, *Éléments* devoted a dossier to the question of communitarianism: “Faut-il haïr le communautarisme?” *Éléments*, 156 (June 2015): pp. 48–62.

<sup>115</sup> Alain de Benoist, “Identité, égalité, différence,” in Alain de Benoist *Critiques: Théoriques*, p. 413. Reworked text for the preface of the second edition of *Vu de droite: Anthologie critique des idées contemporaines* (Paris: Labyrinthe, 2001), pp. xi–xxvii.

<sup>116</sup> Alain de Benoist, “La liberté, la politique et la démocratie,” *Éléments*, 107, (December 2002), p. 34.

<sup>117</sup> Alain de Benoist, “Irremplaçables communautés,” *Éléments*, no. 156 (June 2015): pp. 48–52.

<sup>118</sup> See Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

<sup>119</sup> Robert de Herte [Alain de Benoist], “L’heure de la micro-politique,” *Éléments*, no. 100 (March 2001), p. 3.

community is directly linked to the notion of local democracy,”<sup>120</sup> and this community democracy, he writes, “amounts to rehabilitating the carnal, concrete ‘matrixes’ alongside the abstract, overhanging, anonymous, and distant homeland.. Resistance to planetary homogenization can only take place at the local level.”<sup>121</sup> The *GRECE Manifesto* refers to this in the section titled “For local communities, against gigantism.”<sup>122</sup> It postulates that:

In the face of universalist utopia and individualist tensions, GRECE affirms the strength and normality of differences, which are neither a transitory state towards a higher unity, nor an incidental detail of private life, but the very substance of social existence. [...] Differences are of course native (ethnic, linguistic), but also political. Citizenship refers to belonging, allegiance, and participation in a public life that is distributed across several levels: one can thus be a citizen of one’s neighborhood, one’s city, one’s region, one’s nation, and of Europe at the same time, according to the nature of the power devolved upon each of these scales of decision and sovereignty. On the other hand, one cannot be a citizen of the world, because the “world” is not a political category.<sup>123</sup>

Above all, this “localism” must be analyzed as a “postmodern” evolution of the regionalist rootedness advocated by the New Right in the 1970s and still maintained by *völkisch* groups, such as Terre & Peuple or the magazine *Réfléchir & Agir*. Today, localism goes hand in hand with regionalism thanks to the defense of differences, identities, and traditions that are supposedly embodied in territorially-defined geographical areas, a stance that is close to being a kind of micro-nationalism.

By criticizing the ideology of “progress,” the activists studied here are criticizing Western civilization, deemed to be synonymous both with technological modernity and with a universalist export of values. Their rejection of the Enlightenment was already found among the early Romantics, from whom political ecology stems. In this sense, our circles grow out of the “traditional natural society” idealized in 1887 by the romantic and socialist sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, who is sometimes linked to the German Conservative Revolution by authors belonging to the New Right.<sup>124</sup> Tönnies distinguished *Gesellschaft* (society) from *Gemeinschaft* (community). According to him, the former is directed towards an abstract objective, society, where relations are impersonal and moral obligations towards other people are almost absent; while the latter, on the contrary, is a social bond of a natural and organic type.<sup>125</sup> This distinction also gained currency among the complex web of *völkisch* groups at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, unlike the *völkisch* groups, which promoted the white race, the differentialists, disciples of Robert Jaulin and Claude Lévi-Strauss, wish to limit the “white extension”: that is, they wish to limit the spread of Western values such as Christianity and the economic and cultural liberalism of the Enlightenment.

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<sup>120</sup> Herte [Benoist], p. 3.

<sup>121</sup> Herte [Benoist], p. 3.

<sup>122</sup> GRECE, *Manifeste*, p. 87.

<sup>123</sup> GRECE, *Manifeste*, pp. 68–69.

<sup>124</sup> Luc Pauwels, “La Révolution conservatrice,” in *Liber Amicorum 2 Alain de Benoist*, ed. Thibault Isabel, Paris: Les Amis d’Alain de Benoist, 2013, p. 283.

<sup>125</sup> See Ferdinand Tönnies, *Communauté et société* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1946). See also Aurélien Berlan, *La Fabrique des derniers hommes: Retour sur le présent avec Tönnies, Simmel et Weber* (Paris: La Découverte, 2012), pp. 87–157.



Differentialists have also restored Jean-Jacques Rousseau to favor. As early as 1988, Alain de Benoist asked his readers to “Reread Rousseau,”<sup>126</sup> in whom he saw an opponent of the Enlightenment.<sup>127</sup> Since then, interest in the philosopher has never waned. In many ways, Rousseau can be considered the “first enemy of the Enlightenment,”<sup>128</sup> even though he does not believe in the possibility of a return to the original “state of nature” or to a hypothetical golden age: “human nature does not retrograde,” he wrote several times. Above all, the New Right activists see him as a precursor to the revolutionary-conservative thought they cherish.<sup>129</sup>

Nietzsche is another recurring influence on extreme right-wing activists thanks to his arguments aimed at undermining the “ideology of progress” and modernity. Nietzsche’s devolutionary view of history is correlative to a rejection of the ideology of progress. Indeed, the philosopher altered, wittingly or otherwise, the course of counter-revolutionary traditionalist criticism. He also established positive reasons for this radicalism, such as the normative value pertaining to hierarchical order, or the perspective of the eternal return as that which gives new life to ancient paganism’s theory of cycles. He diagnosed a “crisis of the future” whose echoes we find among environmentalists. This Nietzschean critique of Western modernity was reflected in a whole German pre-environmentalist counterculture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Nietzsche exerted a considerable influence on the youth movements, which, being anti-socialist as well as anti-bourgeois and anti-Christian, prepared and foreshadowed many aspects of post-World War I Germany, especially the environmental movements that emerged from the various currents of the German Conservative Revolution. The people who lived through these initiatives later found themselves part of the country’s first environmental experiments and helped give rise to romantic, anti-Western, and conservative forms of environmentalism. Thus, in some pioneers of German ecology we find forms of radical environmentalism mixed with anti-Semitism. A case in point is the *völkisch* Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, who, already in the middle of the 19th century, associated the defense of German forests with anti-Semitism: according to him, Jews, who were essentially urban, were out to destroy the forests.<sup>130</sup> This idea was later echoed in 1913 by Ludwig Klages in his *Man and Earth*, in which he deplores the rapid extinction of species, deforestation, urbanization, and economic utilitarianism, which he believed were due to Christianity and the acts of Jews. According to Olivier Hanse, it is worth recalling,

concerning the German situation, the often hidden question of the relationship between this political sensitivity and the embarrassing intellectual heritage of the critique of civilization by *Lebensreform* movements (vegetarianism, nudism, reformed pedagogy, etc.) and by the Conservative Revolution, often accused of having made the bed of Nazism but whose contributions to “green culture” are nevertheless undeniable.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Alain de Benoist, “Relire Rousseau,” *Études et recherches*, no. 7 (summer 1989). Reprinted in *Critique: Théoriques* (Lausanne: L’Âge d’Homme, 2002): pp. 313–331.

<sup>127</sup> Alain de Benoist, “Rousseau contre les Lumières,” *Nouvelle École*, no. 65, (2016): pp. 73–98.

<sup>128</sup> See Graeme Garrard, *Rousseau’s Counter-Enlightenment: A Republican Critique of the Philosophes* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 120.

<sup>129</sup> See the special issue titled “Jean-Jacques Rousseau parmi nous,” *Éléments*, no. 143, (June 2012), in particular the articles by Alain de Benoist titled “Rousseau, l’anti-Lumières”: pp. 52–56, and “Rousseau, un révolutionnaire conservateur?": pp. 57–62.

<sup>130</sup> See Oliver Nüchter, “Denkfiguren völkisch autoritärer Ökologie—Im Vater—oder Mutterland,” in *Braune Ökologen*, ed. Heinrich Böll Stiftung (Berlin, HBS, 2012): pp. 20–38.

<sup>131</sup> Olivier Hanse, “‘Le Vert et le Noir’ ou les racines conservatrices de l’écologie politique allemande,” in “L’écologie politique en Allemagne des origines à nous jours,” *Allemagne aujourd’hui*, no. 202, ed. Céline Caro

## Conclusion

Environmental awareness-raising has become a must for almost all political parties: nature is in danger and we must save it to save ourselves. However, for far-right activists, the origin of the “framing of the world,” to use Heidegger’s expression, is to be found in the autonomy of technology, which he asserts is beyond the control of humans. To save humanity and the Earth, we must turn our backs on our Western technological and productivity-obsessed societies born of the Enlightenment, or else face disappearance.

Through its views on ecology, the most radical segment of the far right has forged a discourse with openly reactionary and racist foundations and content. This far-right socio-ecology is driven by identity politics, promotes paganism (or is at least hostile to Christianity and monotheistic religions), and rejects technology and the Enlightenment heritage, with clear survivalist tropes. Behind the socio-ecological discourse, there is an affirmed will to return to a closed, rooted world, which rejects the modernity of the Enlightenment. In this sense, it is indeed a counter-revolutionary discourse, but one that finds lukewarm reception within a complex web of environmentalist and “degrowth” groups.

The ethno-differentialist positions of far-right socio-ecologists have led them to defend traditional societies in the name of both the preservation of identities and the rejection of the Westernization of the world. It ought to be taken as a form of extreme right-wing alter-globalism that sees the United States as an anti-civilizing force needing to be annihilated. The US is alleged to be the propagator of a protean monster—the American way of life, source of all our evils.

Above all, far-right socio-ecologists make their own the Heideggerian idea that modern technique would bring about the end of metaphysics. This domination by technology is, according to them, accomplished to the detriment of the theological dimension of metaphysics, which is excluded by technology from the outset. They wish to re-enchant society by renewing, from an identity-politics perspective, the age-old pact between the human, the sacred, and the world. They thus clearly subscribe to the Heideggerian legacy, in particular through their criticism of the Faustian framing of the world and their decadence-inflected view of history.

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and Jérôme Vaillant, (2012), p. 34.