

Terms and Definitions drawn from *Laudato Si'*

Rapidification (18) The idea that everything is moving along very rapidly today. Human change is happening faster than the slower speed of biological evolution. This is brought on by rapid communication, travel, and data flow.

Throwaway culture (22) A way of living where people treat many things as disposable: people, cultures, and species, as well as goods. When we do this with physical objects, we increase garbage streams and waste resources. In contrast, in nature everything is re-used.

Tyrannical anthropocentrism (68-69; 115ff) The misguided belief that humans stand at the center of creation and all other created beings can be plundered and used as we wish. Modern anthropocentrism has paradoxically ended up prizing technical thought over reality, since “the technological mind sees nature as an insensate order, as a cold body of facts, as a mere ‘given’ as an object of utility, as raw material to be hammered into useful shape; it views the cosmos similarly as a mere ‘space’ into which objects can be thrown with complete indifference.” The intrinsic dignity of the world is thus compromised.

Integral ecology: The heart of Pope Francis’ teaching in the encyclical is his affirmation that the environmental crisis is not only about polluted land, water, and air, but includes dangerous attitudes toward other human beings as well as economic practices that harm people and the environment. (Ch 4)

This is an ecology “which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings” (15). In fact, “nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live” (139).

“Integral ecology,” challenges all people to broaden their focus of concern and their daily behavior to include standard environmental ecology, but also:

- Protection of all human life (123)
- Concrete acts of solidarity with the poor (throughout)
- The common good extending to future generations (159)
- The value of human labor (124)
- Serene harmony with nature (225)
- Simply daily gestures which break with the logic of violence and exploitation and selfishness (230)
- Ethical conduct in economic affairs (throughout)
- Greater attention to urban planning to facilitate social relationships and give all people some contact with nature
- Protection of people’s cultural heritage in an era when media saturation tends to erase distinctions
- A contemplative outlook, one that reflects deeply on ecological decisions (chapter 6)

Economic ecology is one appealing to a vision of reality broader than the market. All the elements of a particular ecosystem can be considered as interconnected, including the human dimension. (141)

Social ecology contributes the connection between the environment and various institutions such as governments and the degrading of nature. (141-142)

Human Ecology refers to the belief that humans, too, have a nature that we must respect and that we cannot manipulate at will. We learn to accept our body in its masculinity and femininity so that we are able to love others. (155)

The common good is “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment.” (156)

Ecological debt: The world’s richest countries have an outstanding “ecological debt” to the world’s poorer countries and they have a social and moral obligation to repay it. (51) Particularly between the global North and South there is a debt “connected to commercial imbalances with effects on the environment, and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time.” The wealth of the world’s most industrialized countries, the pope says, comes in large part from excessive profits drawn from practices like mining or logging in developing countries and taking advantage of their weak environmental protection laws and cheap labor.

Superficial ecology: In times of “deep crisis,” many people try to convince themselves that what is happening around them is not really all that obvious or clear. (59) “Superficially, apart from a few obvious signs of pollution and deterioration, things do not look that serious, and the planet could continue as it is for some time,” he says they tell themselves. While the attitude sounds passive, it actually takes effort. But what is worse is that “such evasiveness serves as a license to carrying on with our present lifestyles and models of production and consumption.”

Gospel of creation: Many of the people most concerned about the environment are not religious. Faith teaches Christians that “human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor, and with the earth itself.” (Ch 2)

The Bible assigns a special place to human beings in the order of creation, but their role is as stewards, not lords. “We are not God,” he says. (67)

“The Gospel of creation” also calls believers to care for and safeguard their brothers and sisters, especially the poor and those unable to defend themselves. It calls them to work for justice and for peace, starting with the most basic forms of sharing and solidarity.

“Since God created the world for everyone, every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged.” (93)

For Christians the incarnation of Jesus adds further proof of the created world being part of God’s loving plan of salvation. “In the Christian understanding of the world, the destiny of all creation is bound up with the mystery of Christ, present from the beginning: ‘All things have been created through him and for him.’” (99)

Ecological conversion. Being a Christian means one recognizes that “the teachings of the Gospel have direct consequences for our way of thinking, feeling and living.” The pope calls for an “ecological conversion” in which Catholics make sure “the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them.” (216ff)

Ecological culture: It is not enough to make a commitment to certain important actions like recycling or even forging international agreements on carbon emissions. What is needed is a whole “ecological culture” which involves “a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational program, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm.” (111)

Compulsive consumerism: At the heart of the ecological disaster is a widespread idea that “leads people to believe that they are free as long as they have the supposed freedom to consume.” (203) Instead of being free to find beauty in nature and praise God for the

gifts he has given, people actually have handed their freedom over to the world's biggest companies and wealthiest individuals who successfully convince them that the best things in life can be bought.

Over-consumption is at the root of excessive waste but it also freezes the human heart and makes it unable to recognize the needs of others. (206)

Dominant technocratic paradigm: The basic assumption that technology is the key to the meaning of existence based on the idea that all progress is good, that profit is always best, that we have endless resources on earth, that we only need to take care of ourselves and technology will solve all of our social problems (e.g. global hunger and poverty) for us.. (106-114)

Promethean (116) is a term coined by the political theorist John Dryzek to describe an environmental orientation which perceives the earth as a resource whose use is determined primarily by human needs and interests and whose environmental problems are overcome through human innovation. Prometheans "propose radical technological solutions...by means of geo-engineering. They are named after Prometheus, one of the Titans of Greek mythology, who stole fire from Zeus and so vastly increased the human capacity to manipulate the world. As such, Prometheans have unlimited confidence in the ability of technology to overcome environmental problems." (Martin Lack)

Ecology is the study of the relationship between living things and the environment in which they live and grow. This leads, of course, to considering the conditions required for life. Everything in such a study is interconnected, one organism affecting the next. Even the smallest things such as atoms and subatomic particles are connected with everything else. (138)

The environment is the relationship between nature and the community of creatures which lives in it. We are not outside of nature looking in; we are in nature and nature is

in us. To understand pollution, for example, one must understand who lives there and how they behave. These days, only comprehensive solutions will work because of this interconnectedness. (139)