

Averting Global Extinction



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The extensive literature about averting ecological disasters, nuclear catastrophe, and unsupportable overpopulation typically describes dangers, analyzes their implications, and presses for remedial action. It seems that what is taken as too obvious and well understood to mention, let alone to address seriously, is humanity's failure to give global and human survival top priority. More careful consideration of this irrational, self-destructive sociocultural negligence shows that it is complex, puzzling, and ensconced and perpetuated by pathological societal defenses. This paradox is *Averting Global Extinction*'s subject; Berger argues that if these psychological defenses were reduced, so would be society's indifference to necessary action. The book's clinically informed approach conceptualizes society's self-destructiveness as an analogue to the self-destructive psychopathologies of individuals, identifies society's ubiquitous and destructive psychological defenses (denial, projection, and avoidance) as the chief element in that sociocultural psychopathology, and devises a "sociocultural therapy." This therapy is accomplished by translating a carefully selected individual psychotherapy framework, a subtype of the so-called analysis of defense, into a corresponding societal therapeutic methodology—society becomes the "patient." This intervention is intended to complement and facilitate, not replace, the usual recommended approaches to rescuing the globe. Thus, three analogies are

deployed between individual and societal: pathology, defenses, and psychotherapy. The book's new and valuable principal contributions are the identification of sociocultural psychopathology as the underlying cause of our near indifference to the threat of global extinction; the recognition of societal defenses as key elements in that pathology; the conceptualization of a therapeutic analogue, applicable at the societal level, to counter that indifference; and the construction of an exemplar of that analogue.

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