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### February 17, 2018: Nihilism, Opioid Epidemics and School Shootings

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Title: Nihilism, Opioid Epidemics and School Shootings

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2/17/2018—Yes, undoubtedly there are policies that would prevent school shootings and mass shootings in general. There are probably even policies that would pass Congress that would be helpful. How about a real prohibition on the illegal modification of semi-automatic weapons to machine guns?—that would have saved lives in Las Vegas. How about an armed guard at every school? Metal detectors? These policies don't pass because it is in the interest of politicians and interest groups to maintain political solidarity against the other side. Compromise is not in the interest of these people. Democrats have to talk gun control. Republicans have to talk mental derangement. It is a script even if it does not solve problems. That deadlock is a symptom of a larger issue. How have we come to be so divided that we don't want to work together even to protect children? That larger issue has an even deeper foundation. Why is it Americans want to shoot other Americans? What kind of society produces people who kill at concerts and schools? I understand Islamic terrorism to some extent. It is a protest against American and Western policies in Islamic lands. What are the domestic shootings about? America has always been a place that prizes individualism. That is why America never had the real mass socialist movements of Europe. But now that the social structures have broken down—churches, families, neighborhoods—now that we are isolated screens and ghostly social media presences, we are actually going crazy. At the base of all this is the new story of reality—everything is an accident of contingent physical forces and your life has no meaning. Or, as the New York Times column put it in July, *The Universe Doesn't Care About Your Purpose*. Tell that story often enough and watch the hatred and carnage. Those are the wages of nihilism. So, health requires more than policies. Health requires a new story. There is one, to be sure. But where can you hear it? Here and in some other places. It is the story of natural meaning—of divinity within nature. It is the story of a new kind of teleology. It is a story of the holy and of beauty. A universe of self-government. That will be the new foundation of democracy one day.