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# What can we do with anti-fascism?

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> The fox knows many things.
> The porcupine only one, but it is great.
>
> *Archilochus*

Fascism is a seven-letter word beginning with F. Human beings like playing with words which, by partly concealing reality, absolve them from personal reflection or having to make decisions. The symbol acts in our place, supplying us with a flag and an alibi.

And when we put 'anti-' in front of the symbol it is not simply a question of being against what absolutely disgusts us. We feel safe that we are on the other side and have done our duty. Having recourse to that 'anti-' gives us a clear conscience, enclosing us in a well-guarded and much frequented field.

Meanwhile things move on. The years go by and so do power relations. New bosses take the place of the old and the tragic coffin of power is passed from one hand to the next. The fascists of yesteryear have complied with the democratic game and handed

over their flags and swastikas to a few madmen. And why not? That is the way of men of power. The chit-chat comes and goes, political realism is eternal. But we, who know little or nothing of politics, are embarressedly asking ourselves whatever has happened given that the black-shirted, club-bearing fascists we once fought so resolutely are disappearing from the scene. So, like headless chickens we are looking for a new scapegoat against which we can unleash our all-too-ready hatred, while everything around us is becoming more subtle and mellow and power is calling on us to enter into dialogue: But please step forward, say what you have to say, it's not a problem! Don't forget, we're living in a democracy, everyone has the right to say what they like. Others listen, agree or disagree, then sheer numbers decide the game. The majority win and the minority are left with the right to continue to disagree. So long as everything remains within the dialectic of taking sides.

If we were to reduce the question of fascism to words, we would be forced to admit it had all been a game. Perhaps a dream: 'Mussolini, an honest man, a great politician. He made mistakes. But who didn't? Then he got out of control. He was betrayed. We were all betrayed. Fascist mythology? Leave it at that! There's no point in thinking about such relics of the past.'

'Hitler', Klausmann recounts, sarcastically portraying the mentality of Gerhart Hauptmann, the old theoretician of political realism, 'in the last analysis … my dear friends! … no bad feelings! … let's try to be … no, if you don't mind, … allow me … objective … can I get you another drink? This champagne … really extraordinary—Hitler the man, I mean … the champagne as well, for that matter … an absolutely extraordinary evolution … German youth … about seven million votes … as I have often said to my Jewish friends … these Germans … incredible nation … truly mysterious … cosmic impulses … Goethe … the saga of dynamic … elementary irresistible tendencies…'

No, not at the level of small talk. Differences get hazy over a glass of good wine and everything becomes a matter of opinion. Because,

and this is the important thing, there are differences, not between fascism and antifascism but between those who want power and those who fight against it and refuse it. But at what level are the foundations of these differences to be found?

By having recourse to historical analysis? I don't think so. Historians are the most useful category of idiots in the service of power. They think they know a lot but the more they furiously study documents, the more that is all they know: documents which incontrovertibly attest what happened, the will of the individual imprisoned in the rationality of the event. The equivalent of truth and fact. To consider anything else possible is a mere literary pastime. If the historian has the faintest glimmer of intelligence, he moves over to philosophy immediately, immersing himself in common anguish and such like. Tales of deeds, fairy-tale gnomes and enchanted castles. Meanwhile the world around us settles into the hands of the powerful and their revision-book culture, unable to tell the difference between a document and a baked potato. 'If man's will were free', writes Tolstoy in War and Peace, 'the whole of history would be a series of fortuitous events… if instead there is one single law governing man's actions, free will cannot exist, because man's will must be subject to those laws.'

The fact is that historians are useful, especially for supplying us with elements of comfort, alibis and psychological crutches. How courageous the Communards of 1871 were! They died like brave men against the wall at Père Lachaise! And the reader gets excited and prepares to die as well if necessary, against the next wall of the communards. Waiting for social forces to put us in the condition of dying as heroes gets us through everyday life, usually to the threshold of death without this occasion ever presenting itself. Historical trends are not all that exact. Give or take a decade, we might miss this opportunity and find ourselves empty handed.

If you ever want to measure a historian's imbecility, get him to reason on things that are in the making rather than on the past. It will be a mind-opener!

No, not historical analysis. Perhaps political or political-philosophical discussion, the kind we have become accustomed to reading in recent years. Fascism is something one minute, and something else the next. The technique for making these analyses is soon told. They take the Hegelian mechanism of asserting and contradicting at the same time (something similar to the critique of arms that becomes an arm of criticism), and extract a seemingly clear affirmation about anything that comes to mind at the time. It's like that feeling of disillusionment you get when, after running to catch a bus you realise that the driver, although he saw you, has accelerated instead of stopping.

Well, in that case one can demonstrate, and I think Adorno has done, that it is precisely a vague unconscious frustration—caused by the life that is escaping us which we cannot grasp—which surges up, making us want to kill the driver. Such are the mysteries of Hegelian logic! So, fascism gradually becomes less contemptible. Because inside us, lurking in some dark corner of our animal instinct, it makes our pulse quicken. Unknown to ourselves, a fascist lurks within us. And it is in the name of this potential fascist that we come to justify all the others. No extremists, of course! Did so many really die? Seriously, in the name of a misunderstood sense of justice people worthy of great respect put Faurisson's nonsense into circulation. No, it is better not to venture along this road.

When knowledge is scarce and the few notions we have seem to dance about in a stormy sea, it is easy to fall prey to the stories invented by those who are cleverer with words than we are. In order to avoid such an eventuality the Marxists, goodly programmers of others' minds that they are (particularly those of the herded proletariat), maintained that fascism is equivalent to the truncheon. On the opposite side even philosophers like Gentile suggested that the truncheon, by acting on the will, is also an ethical means in that it constructs the future symbiosis between State and individual in that superior unity wherein the individual act becomes collective. Here we see how Marxists and fascists originate from the same

of immense and varied relations, but where the constant always remains my way of being and living, with all its variations and evolution.

I have traversed the realm of man in every sense and have not yet found where I might quench my thirst for knowledge, diversity, passion, dreams, a lover in love with love. Everywhere I have seen enormous potential let itself be crushed by ineptitude, and meagre capacity blossom in the sun of constancy and commitment. But as long as the opening towards what is different flourishes, the receptiveness to let oneself be penetrated and to penetrate to the point that there is not a fear of the other, but rather an awareness of one's limitations and capabilities—and so also of the limits and capabilities of the other—affinity is possible; it is possible to dream of a common, perpetual undertaking beyond the contingent, human approach. The further we move away from all this, affinities begin to weaken and finally disappear. And so we find those outside, those who wear their feelings like medals, who flex their muscles and do everything in their power to appear fascinating. And beyond that, the mark of power, its places and its men, the forced vitality, the false idolatry, the fire without heat, the monologue, the chit chat, the uproar, the usable, everything that can be weighed and measured.

That is what I want to avoid. That is my antifascism.



ideological stock, with all the ensuing practical consequences, concentration camps included. But let us continue. No, fascism is not just the truncheon, nor is it even just Pound, Céline, Mishima or Cioran. It is not one of these elements, or any other taken individually, but is all of them put together. Nor is it the rebellion of one isolated individual who chooses his own personal struggle against all others, at times including the State, and could even attract that human sympathy we feel towards all rebels, even uncomfortable ones. No, that is not what fascism is.

For power, crude fascism such as has existed at various times in history under dictatorships, is no longer a practicable political project. New instruments are appearing along with the new managerial forms of power. So let us leave it for the historians to chew away on as much as they like. Fascism is out of fashion even as a political insult or accusation. When a word comes to be used disparagingly by those in power, we cannot make use of it as well. And because this word and related concept disgusts us, it would be well to put one and the other away in the attic along with all the other horrors of history and forget it.

Forget the word and the concept, but not what is concealed under it. We must keep this in mind in order to prepare ourselves to act. Hunting fascists might be a pleasant sport today but it could represent an unconscious desire to avoid a deeper analysis of reality, to avoid getting behind that dense scheme of power which is getting more and more complicated and difficult to decipher.

I can understand antifascism. I am an antifascist too, but my reasons are not the same as those of the many I heard in the past and still hear today who define themselves as such. For many, fascism had to be fought twenty years ago when it was in power in Spain, Portugal, Greece, Chile, etc. When the new democratic regimes took their places in these countries, the antifascism of so many ferocious opponents extinguished itself. It was then that I realised the antifascism of my old comrades in struggle was different to mine. For me nothing had changed. What we did in Greece, Spain,

the Portuguese colonies and in other places could have continued even after the democratic State had taken over and inherited the past successes of the old fascism. But everyone did not agree. It is necessary to know how to listen to old comrades who tell of their adventures and the tragedies they have known, of the many murdered by the fascists, the violence and everything else. 'But', as Tolstoy again said, 'the individual who plays a part in historical events never really understands the significance of them. If he tries to understand them he becomes a sterile component.' I understand less those who, not having lived these experiences, and therefore don't find themselves prisoners of such emotions half a century later, borrow explanations that no longer have any reason to exist, and which are often no more than a simple smokescreen to hide behind.

'I am an antifascist!', they throw at you like a declaration of war, 'and you?'

In such cases my almost spontaneous reply is—no, I am not an antifascist. I am not an antifascist in the way that you are. I am not an antifascist because I went to fight the fascists in their countries while you stayed in the warmth of Italian democracy which nevertheless put mafiosi like Scelba, Andreotti and Cossiga in government. I am not an antifascist because I have continued to fight against the democracy that replaced these soap opera versions of fascism. It uses more up to date means of repression and so is, if you like, more fascist than the fascists before them. I am not an antifascist because I am still trying to identify those who hold power today and do not let myself be blinded by labels and symbols, while you continue to call yourself an antifascist in order to have a justification for coming out into the streets to hide behind your 'Down with fascism!' banners. Of course, if I had been older than eight at the time of the 'resistance', perhaps I too would be overwhelmed by youthful memories and ancient passions and would not be so lucid. But I don't think so. Because, if one examines the facts carefully, even between the confused and anonymous conglomeration



of the antifascism of political formations, there were those who did not conform, but went beyond it, continued, and carried on well beyond the 'ceasefire'! Because the struggle, the life and death struggle, is not only against the fascists of past and present, those in the blackshirts, but is also and fundamentally against the power that oppresses us, with all the elements of support that make it possible, even when it wears the permissive and tolerant guise of democracy.

'Well then, you might have said so right away!'—someone could reply—'you are an antifascist too.'

'And how else could it be? You are an anarchist, so you are an antifascist! Don't tire us by splitting hairs.'

But I think it is useful to draw distinctions. I have never liked fascists, nor consequently fascism as a project. For other reasons (but which when carefully examined turn out to be the same), I have never liked the democratic, the liberal, the republican, the Gaullist, the labour, the Marxist, the communist, the socialist or any other of those projects. Against them I have always opposed not so much my being anarchist as my being different, therefore anarchist. First of all my individuality, my own personal way of understanding life and nobody else's, of understanding it and therefore of living it, of feeling emotions, searching, discovering, experimenting, and loving. I only allow entry into this world of mine to the ideas and people who appeal to me; the rest I hold far off, politely or otherwise.

I don't defend, I attack. I am not a pacifist, and don't wait until things go beyond the safety level. I try to take the initiative against all those who might even potentially constitute a danger to my way of living life. And part of this way is also the need and desire for others—not as metaphysical entities, but clearly identified others, those who have an affinity with my way of living and being. And this affinity is not something static and determined once and for all. It is a dynamic fact which changes and continues to grow and widen, revealing yet other people and ideas, and weaving a web