

Fascism: A Precursor to Postmodernism

by

Bill Crouse, President of Christian Information Ministries

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I. Popular Definitions of Fascism

You hear the word *fascism* bandied about in the press and media quite a bit nowadays but almost always as a pejorative describing one's enemy.¹ Zeev Sternhell says, *The label fascist has become the term of abuse par excellence, conclusive and unanswerable.*² It is also the ultimate way to insult an opponent though no one ever claims the label. Unfortunately, it's increased usage today is not accompanied by a proper or historical understanding of the term. When most people think of fascism today, they think of an egomaniacal fuhrer, or possibly an ideology that was defeated in WWII, and more recently espoused by uneducated skinheads or militants in northern Idaho. The most common, but largely false and simplistic answer given to the question, What is Fascism? is: *The extreme right wing of the political spectrum, i.e., conservatism, or, the polar opposite of Marxism.* The term itself originates from the Latin; *fascis*, literally meaning: *the bundle of rods sporting an axe-head that symbolized the unchallenged state authority of Rome.* (You can see this symbol on the backside of a silver Mercury dime, cir. 1916). Later it came to mean: *high office or supreme power or command.* The first apparent use of the term: *Fascist*, was by Benito Mussolini when he formed the Fascist Party of Italy in 1919.

The definition given in *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*: *Any program for setting up and*

centralizing an autocratic regime with severely authoritarian politics exercising regulation of industry, commerce and finance, rigid censorship, and forcible oppression of opposition. I find this unsatisfactory in that it gives mostly the symptoms of fascism. It's not just a dictatorship.

The two most frequent answers I received as a young student when I asked: *What is fascism?* were: *Why it's National Socialism (Nazism), or: It's right wing extremism and racism.* While these popular definitions contain some truth, I maintain they are superficial in describing one of the most powerful movements of the 20th Century. Most definitions of fascism seem to focus on its political and economic elements. There is a reason for this: for almost 70 years the intellectuals telling the story of fascism have been disseminated by leftists who sought to portray fascism as a tool of big business to control the masses.³ Though political and economic theory do assuredly emanate from one's world view, it won't be our primary focus here.

II. The Thesis of This Paper

The thesis of this brief paper is that postmodernism, an attitude and a way of seeing reality which thoroughly permeates our western culture, is a direct descendant of fascism, and still contains many of its key elements. As an ideology or world view, fascism is an important ancestor of postmodernism that should not be ignored. That there is a strong family resemblance one barely dares suggest, though more and more brave souls are speaking out. One of these is Richard Wolin of City University of New York. In his book, *The Seduction of Unreason*, he writes:

[P]ostmodernism has been nourished by the doctrines of Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Blanchot, and Paul de Man--all of whom either prefigured or

succumbed to the proverbial intellectual “fascination with fascism.”⁴

III. The Roots of Fascism

Fascism was not, and is not, an anti-intellectual phenomenon. It’s ideas were not forged by dictators and thugs. We now know that the academic centers, the main universities of Europe, were rife with ideas that contributed to the make-up of the fascist world view. Gene Edward Veith, writes:

No one should doubt the intellectual sophistication of the National Socialists. Elie Wiesel discovered that, contrary to the myth that the Nazis were uneducated brutes, most of the killers of the death squads had college degrees, including some with Ph.D.s in philosophy, literature, and even theology. . . . One study of a local Nazi party organization shows that 43.3 percent were university students. ⁵

Likewise, George L. Mosse, premier historian of fascism, concurs that the ideology called fascism was almost exclusively a movement among the avant garde, and the intelligentsia in European academia. ⁶

The intellectual roots of fascism are deep, intertwined, and often paradoxical. Most of its rudimentary ideas were formed in the second half of the 19th Century and were a reaction against the Enlightenment (modernism). Almost all of the major thinkers of the late 19th Century made some contribution to fascist thinking, though there were a myriad of minor players. Some of the major ideas that contributed to this unholy brew were: romanticism, Darwinian evolution, alienation, and existentialism. Even Marxism must be considered in the shaping of fascism since some of the prominent leaders, Mussolini, for example, were Marxists, though the movement in some respects, evolved into a reaction against Marxism. Both Marxism and fascism opposed

classical liberalism, both were revolutionary, and advocates of absolute government. The Italian strain of fascism looked more to Machiavelli and the idealism of Hegel, while the Germanic version took more of a cue from Nietzsche and the German romanticists.

Alienation

There can be little doubt that fascism was in some way the result of the alienation that followed the industrial revolution of the 19th Century. Science, technology, political changes, the philosophy of the enlightenment, and economic realities, created a barrier to man's unity with the natural world. The philosophy of the 19th Century described the cosmos as a giant machine. That man was machine-like, and part of the greater machine, led to the feeling of not only being isolated from his fellow man, but also from nature. Veith says:

Fascism is essentially a response to the alienation that has been a part of the spiritual landscape of the West since the Enlightenment.

Logic and rationalism, with their cold analyses and denial of basic human impulses, have seemed stifling, heightening the sense of alienation. If objective knowledge is alienating, subjective experience is liberating and healing. Authentic existence comes from unleashing the emotions, cultivating the subjective and irrational dimension of life. The attempts to resolve the dilemma of alienation, understandable as they are, would find concrete and political expression in fascism. 7

Romanticism

Romanticism became the antidote to alienation. It asserted the value of the natural world in that it was seen not as a machine, but as a living organism. Nature must not be approached with reason and intellect, but by experience, emotions, and irrationalism, as opposed to rationalism. The immanence of God (or gods) was emphasized while transcendence was denied. Romanticism was also characterized by nostalgia for the past and an admiration for the primitive. It was believed that primitive cultures were morally superior because they were more in tune with

the natural world. Isaiah Berlin in his book: *The Roots of Romanticism*, says

Fascism too is an inheritor of romanticism, not because it is irrational-- plenty of movements have been that-- nor because of a belief in elites-- plenty of movements have held that belief. The reason why Fascism owes something to romanticism is, again, because of the notion of the unpredictable will either of man or of a group, which forges forward in some fashion that is impossible to organise, impossible to predict, impossible to rationalise. That is the whole heart of Fascism.⁸

Darwinism

In a sense Darwinism was a refutation of romanticism which held that by observing the beauty and harmony of nature one could be taught lessons of harmony and peace. Darwinism, however, saw the other side of nature, i.e., struggle, violence and cruelty. The law of nature is *the survival of the fittest*. Progress comes from ruthless competition, the strong destroying the weak. Darwinists theorized that if progress comes from struggle on the natural level, it must also come about that way on the social level (Social Darwinism). Darwinism gave new notions of heredity, race and environment. The Nazis took Darwinism to its natural conclusion: If you can breed better sheep by selective breeding why not human beings (eugenics)? Zeev Sternhell says

Darwinism

stripped the human personality of its sacramental dignity. It made no distinction between the physical life and the social life, and conceived of the human condition in terms of an unceasing struggle, whose natural outcome was the survival of the fittest.⁹

Much to the chagrin of modern-day evolutionists, Richard Weikart has written a whole treatise on the Nazi application of Darwinism to race and culture. If you want the proof, you will find it in: *From Darwin to Hitler*. In this incredible volume, Weikart quotes a German zoologist to show the extent of the Darwinian application among Nazi-fascists. The scientist was Robby Kossman. Note what he says:

that the Darwinian world view must look upon the present sentimental conception of the

value of the life of a human individual as an overestimate completely hindering the progress of humanity. The human state also, like every animal community of individuals, must reach an even higher level of perfection, if the possibility exists in it, *through the destruction of the less well-endowed individual*, for the more excellently endowed to win space for the expansion of its progeny. . . The state only has an interest in preserving the more excellent life *at the expense of the less excellent*.**10**

So how did the fascists reconcile romanticism with Darwinism? I quote Veith again:

It appealed to a certain elitism that was inherent in romantic individualism. Romantics tended to consider themselves superior beings in a world of mediocrities. The tough-mindedness of Darwinism, its sanction of ruthlessness, also could appeal to those romantics who were repelled by Victorian moralism and sentimentality. Their goal was still to become one with nature, even a nature red in tooth and claw. **11**

Existentialism

In my opinion, Friedrich Nietzsche was one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th Century though he died at its dawning. His apologists: Walter Kauffman, Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, et al, fail to diminish his influence on the fascism debacle. Wolin shatters this myth and demonstrates that the facts argue otherwise.**12** At least Nietzsche was intellectually honest; his followers often are not.

Nietzsche simply took the ideas of romanticism and the Darwinian science one step further. In addition, he mounted a full-scale intellectual assault on the Judeo-Christian tradition that was the foundation of Western Civilization. I am not saying that existentialism, particularly the French version, is compatible with fascism. The former gloried in individual identity, the latter in group identity. Both, however, were advocates for the eradication of morality based on transcendence, and both opposed philosophical rationalism. The Nazi attempt to eliminate the weak and unfit cannot only be traced directly to Darwin, but also the writings of Nietzsche. Hitler's plan for the Aryan race was only an application of Nietzsche's Superman. The famed Nazi cruelty can likewise be traced to Nietzsche's criticism of Christ's teaching of loving the

downtrodden. One of the greatest books in the German heritage, and one of the foremost books of the Reformation was Luther's *BONDAGE OF THE WILL*. It was no accident that the great existentialist and Fascist theme was *THE TRIUMPH OF THE WILL*.¹³

I now turn to the major components that make up a definition of the fascist world view.

IV. The Major Tenets of Fascism

I believe a proper definition of historical and philosophical fascism can be achieved by the comprehension of three of its major ideas, each inter-dependent of the other. They are immanence, organicism, and irrationalism.

A. Immanence

Ernst Nolte, German historian, and former student of Heidegger, describes fascism as *the practical and violent resistance to transcendence*.¹⁴ It's hard to overestimate the importance of this factor in understanding the virulence of fascist hatred for the Jews, Judaism, and Christianity.

Most historians that I'm aware of, do not readily pick up on this insight, other than Nolte, though, of course, it was a main theme of Nietzsche.¹⁵ Other reasons are usually given for the racism of the Nazis, such as their concept of racial purity and the belief that the Jews were the source of both communism and capitalism. Hannah Arendt, known for her work: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, also affirms that Nazi hatred of the Jews was not so much blood hatred as it was world view.¹⁶ They not only wished to exterminate the Jews as a race, but also their ideas, i.e., their transcendent religion. The question naturally arises: why did the fascists find Jewish monotheism so abhorrent?

Decades before the advent of the fascist rise to power, continental theologians, philosophers,

and literary figures had already succumbed to mysticism, nature religions and doctrines of immanence.¹⁷ Fascist theoreticians concluded that the worst thing ever to happen to Western Civilization was the idea of monotheism, or the transcendent god invented by Moses. It was believed that it led Judaism and Christianity to be too restrictive and intolerant. Though German intellectuals were aware Christianity was greatly entrenched in their history and culture, their conscious goal was to *de-hebraize* Christianity. If it can't be eliminated; it could be changed. This is well documented by Richard Grunberger in *The 12 -Year Reich*. He writes:

In the purely religious sphere the “ethnic” ideology spawned two divergent trends. One tended towards a purely German i.e. de-Romanized, and de-Judaicized form of Christianity; the other towards “New Heathenism” (*neuheidentum*). German Christianity focused on the Aryan saviour Jesus, transfigured physically into a Nordic and psychologically into a bearer of the sword rather than the crown of thorns. The new heathenism dethroned him entirely and substituted either Wotan-worship or a cult of nature centered on the sun.¹⁸

Essentially there was a movement backward toward Germany's pagan past, and with it, an ethics based on nature, the needs of the community, and the assertion of the will. The existence of only one transcendent God according to the fascists drained the immanent world of its spiritual significance. They sought to restore the values of ancient myths and primitive cultures. Mosse writes: *The mystical and the occult were taken both as an explanation and a solution to man's alienation from modern society, culture, and politics.*¹⁹ That the Nazi leaders were in deep in the occult is no secret. To quote Mosse again:

[M]ystical and occult ideas influenced the world view of early National Socialism, and especially of Adolf Hitler, who to the end of his life believed in “secret sciences” and occult forces. It is important to unravel this strand of Nazi ideology because this mysticism was at the core of much of the irrationalism of the movement, and especially of the world view of its leader.²⁰

To fascist intellectuals the answer to alienation was to rid itself of the *Hebrew disease* by affirming immanence. To the German fascists especially, the Jews were too cerebral, too anti-

nature, and too urban. Since their world view was mediated through Scripture, it would have to be shorn of its authority. Fortunately, all they had to do was appeal to the work of the German higher critics.²¹ For Christianity, its New Testament would have to be re-constructed to rid it of Paul, the Jew's influence. Grunberger tells how this project was completed in the educational system of the country.²²

It was readily agreed upon that the Jewish world view led to the concepts of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and it was these ideas that were vigorously opposed by fascism. Veith comments:

For the fascists

Hierarchy is a necessity. In nature the strong have prerogatives over the weak, and natural collectives in a beehive, a flock of birds, or a wolf pack, there is a pecking order and hierarchical roles so that the whole group can survive. In nature, there is no equality, nor is there liberty. Animals obey their instincts; their actions are determined by nature and by the needs of their species. Culturally, equality and liberty are also illusions.²³

Ezra Pound, the poet, and ardent follower of Italian fascism, was also perceptive in understanding the ramifications of the Judeo-Christian world view. He often went on tirades against the Jewish idea of transcendence. Robert Casillo who has analyzed Pound's work says:

[For Pound] another pernicious instrument of monotheistic tyranny is ethical absolutism or "code-worship". . . Unlike the flexible Greeks; [the Jews] follow rigid laws and formal procedures and a categorical set of moral standards (the Ten Commandments) which now have a wide if not universal application. . . . As monotheism severs man from Nature, so its categorical morality alienates man from his natural impulses. This is why Pound considers Judaism the religion *par excellence* of punishment and repression, of the "forbidden," of "taboo." Repeatedly he emphasizes the "brute disorder" of Jewish taboos and the Jews' responsibility for the "sadistic and masochistic tendencies" of Christianity.²⁴

Though it is missed by many of the scholars and historians of fascism, the idea of immanence and dread of transcendent morality goes a long way in explaining fascist thought and behavior.

B. Organicism

Perhaps the easiest way to explain the concept of organicism (sometimes called corporatism) might be to compare it with Paul's teaching of the Body of Christ as a metaphor of the Church in Ephesians, Chapter Four. Fascists, likewise, saw the state as a living organic unity, as a human body, having separate organs that contribute to the general welfare, and a larger interest or general will, that is superior to, and more important than any of the members.²⁵ In contrast, liberalism saw the state as an institution created to protect man's rights; fascism looked on the state as an organic entity without the individual in view. In this kind of society where there was no infinite or transcendent reference point, the state became supreme. One of Mussolini's favorite sayings was: *Everything in the state, nothing against the state, and nothing outside the state*. As you might guess, fascists voiced explicit hostility to the individual ego. This anti-individualism was especially prominent in the writings of the Italian philosopher, Giovanni Gentile.²⁶ When they did look at man, it was the heroic individual as opposed to the hedonic ethos. They saw the ideal man as brave, ruthless, not preoccupied with personal advantage, fighting for ideals, given to action not thought, not seeking comfort, but one who seeks to experience life intensely, and above all for the welfare of the state.²⁷

Individual worth and identity was seen by the fascists as another poisonous doctrine perpetrated by the Jews who believed man's worth was based on the *IMAGO DEI*. According to fascist ideology, individual identity comes only from the group, and since culture determines the individual, the needs of the culture have priority. Fascism opposed human autonomy. Culture, therefore, took on a mystical, almost god-like status. Civilization, according to fascists was the result of Jewish abstraction and reason. Culture is everything; it is organic and ethnic.

Civilization is mechanical and rational and brings on alienation according to fascists. This glorification of culture and ethnicity of course led to virulent racism the Nazis have been most noted for.

It does not take much imagination to posit that an organic view of the state will be authoritarian, totalitarian, requiring a strong leader. However, some distinctions must be made. Many dictatorships require a de-mobilized and passive population to stay in power. For the fascists it was the goal of the supreme leader to energize and excite the people to new dedication and creativity as they saw the state as a living being. It was mass politics; everything, every action was a political action that was for the benefit of the state.

In this kind of polity it was necessary to create myths, traditions, calendars, etc. that served to unify and provide *esprit de corps* for the health of the organism. Again, it does not take too much imagination, that for the leader, the greatest fear will be the possibility of national disintegration which can come in the form of alien ideas, alien blood (immigration), and sudden loss of spirit. Hence the necessity of constant warfare, for it is through warfare that the spirit is maintained and aliens are kept at bay. The super organism is fully justified in liquidating any element in it, or outside of it, that threatens the entity. For some, the state almost takes on a aura of a deity or supernatural being. Hegel said: *The march of God in the world, that is what the State is.***28**

The historians and analysts are correct to view fascism as ultra nationalism. It's only a mistake, in my opinion, when they limit the definition to this exclusively.**29** Nationalism is the result of underlying philosophical issues. With this organic nationalism comes the necessity of an ultimate authority, or supreme leader. Historically it meant the leader equals the state. Umberto Eco says:

For Ur-Fascism, however, individuals, as individuals have no rights, and the People is conceived as a quality, a monolithic entity expressing the Common Will. Since no large quantity of human beings can have a common will, the Leader pretends to be their interpreter.³⁰

There was no such thing as free will on the whole. Nietzsche wrote:

[O]ne belongs to the whole, one is in the whole; there is nothing which could judge, measure, compare, or sentence our being, for that would mean judging, measuring, or sentencing the whole. But there is nothing besides the whole. That nobody is held responsible any longer...that alone is the great liberation. . . We deny God, we deny responsibility in God: only thereby do we redeem the world.³¹

C. Irrationalism

Irrationalism results from the denial of transcendence. To fully understand fascism it is necessary to understand this turn to irrationalism in the context of the revolt against the enlightenment (and positivism) and the turn toward romanticism in the 19th Century. Umberto Eco says *Fascism was philosophically out of joint, but emotionally it was firmly fastened to some archetypal foundations.*³² He goes on to say:

The Enlightenment, the Age of Reason, is seen as the beginning of modern depravity. In this sense Ur-Fascism can be defined as *irrationalism*. . . . Irrationalism also depends on the cult of *action for action's sake*. Action being beautiful in itself, it must be taken before, or without, any previous reflection. Thinking is a form of emasculation. Therefore culture is suspect insofar as it is identified with critical attitudes. Distrust of the intellectual world has always been a symptom of Ur-Fascism. . . . The official Fascist intellectuals were mainly engaged in attacking modern culture and the liberal intelligentsia for having betrayed traditional values.³³

Irrationalism is the ultimate denial of the validity and authority of reason, i.e., classical logic in establishing a basis for truth. By doing this you deny the existence of a rational, transcendent deity and the possibility of objective knowledge. The fascist theorist would argue that reason is inadequate, since political behavior is largely non-rational, and therefore, as a rule, not susceptible to the kind of solutions intellectuals habitually seek to impose. In its place, once the

existence of universals are denied, are mysticism, myths, the sense of life force, and violence and revolution. Carl Cohen is one of those who includes irrationalism as one of the main components of fascism. He writes: *It is the outcome of the abandonment of intellect as the ideal ruling faculty in political affairs and its replacement by some nonintellectual function.*³⁴ He lists these replacements as sentiment, inspiration, passion, intuition, force or will. He goes on to quote a major fascist figure, George Sorel, on this point:

The clearest expression of political irrationalism is found in the works of George Sorel, whose doctrine of the social myth has had great influence, not only upon the syndicalist movement of which he was a part, but especially upon fascist philosophy in the twentieth century. A true myth, said Sorel, was not a rational conception of a future society, but a vision, a dream, a great emotional force that could inspire violent revolutionary activity. Such myths are not subject to scientific analysis or rational discussion. Their nature renders analysis inappropriate, and their advocates must refuse to engage in any intellectual discussion or their virtues. The function of a myth is mass inspiration; “the myths are not descriptions of things,” Sorel said, “but determinations to act.”³⁵

In both Germany and Italy the rational was replaced by the aesthetic. Mosse writes:

Poetry, music, and art played an important part in the fascist movement as expressions of the non-rational needs of men, which must be satisfied if men were to achieve the necessary spiritual unity and take up the activism that would overcome the bourgeois age. . . [A]ll fascists believed that, in the last resort, the spiritual unity of the nation would resolve all difficulties. Most fascist intellectuals defined this spiritual unity as a resurgence of creativity viewed in aesthetic terms: the dawn of beauty and of aesthetic form.³⁶

We are all too aware of the results of this departure from rationality. Without a basis for rationality and rational discourse, both personal and national, the result was violence. The historian, Paul Johnson, in his book, *Intellectuals*, documents this fascination with violence among the intellectual elite, even after WWII. He too, attributes it to “The Flight From Reason.” which is also the title to the last chapter of his book.³⁷

It would be an understatement to assert that the fascists were iconoclasts. They took

Nietzsche literally and believed one should “philosophize with hammer,” and such is often the case with any turn to irrationalism. It’s Prometheus unhinged!

In summary, the core of philosophical fascism consists of three main components: a radical denial of transcendent authority. In its place, is an all powerful, absolute state which is seen in an organic sense, and a final and irrevocable retreat from rationality.

V. Postmodernism: the Spawn of Fascism

Up until now, most of what I’ve written is probably non-controversial. There are a multitude of sources to call upon to document a case for the roots and components of historic fascism as I have defined it here. However, a great temptation exists, and even the possibility for deception. It might be assumed that since the great fascist regimes were defeated in WWII that fascism as an ideology and world view is dead. This, I believe, to be a mistake. Hence, I pose the question: Does fascism live on today? Is it just the plaything of human rejects and extreme right-wing kooks? Or, could intellectuals still be having *an intellectual romance* with fascist ideas as Wolin contends?³⁸ I’m definitely not alone in asserting that there is a great deal of similarity in the contemporary expressions of postmodernism. Many scholars have now traced the genealogy of deconstruction and postmodernism. Some of these writers, most of them already quoted are: Richard Wolin, Robert Bork, Gene Edward Veith, Peter Berger, David Lehman, and John Neuhaus. With a few exceptions, most of the above, and others, see the closest resemblance to historic fascism in today’s radical left. Veith notes:

Whether or not Heidegger and De Man were naive in their allegiance to fascism, the controversy about their involvement does show the naivete of contemporary scholarship. It is as if the memory of fascism-- what it was and why it was so appealing-- has been suppressed from our cultural consciousness.³⁹

In the late sixties, Peter Berger already noted

the strong family resemblance of the New Left to German and Italian fascism. . . Berger traced a number of parallels between the New Left ideology and that of European fascists that he had observed first hand in his youth. Both were movements that were without a positive view of the future but were simply against their society--against stability, traditional liberalism, capitalism, and intellectualism. . . Both proclaimed that liberal democracy was a fraud and rationality merely a prop for the evil status quo. . . Both fascists and the New Left had faith in the therapeutic value of violence. . . Both the fascists and New Left dehumanized their enemies. . . The Nazis referred to the Jews as “pigs” which is what American radicals called the police. Finally, there was a “mystical elitism” that made the radicals sure they represented a “general will.”⁴⁰

There are some differences between historic fascism and postmodernism. The two most notable being its anti-nationalism and anti-racism. Postmodernists are much more international and cosmopolitan in spirit; it is like the bumper sticker: *One planet, one people, please!*⁴¹ While the fascists in Nazi Germany were racists based on blood purity, today the emphasis is on cultures, ethnicity and identity politics. The xenophobia we see in Europe today is not based on blood, but religion and culture.

The resemblances, on the other hand, are numerous and could be a subject for another paper. Both fascists and postmodernists deny a transcendent source of truth, and believe truth is a social construct.

As you might expect, freedom of speech is denied in a fascist regime as it might be harmful to the organism, a foregone conclusion. In postmodernism it's more subtle, with its speech codes and political correctness. Words, according to postmodernists are tools of oppression as they can offend a group.

Both fascists and postmodernists stress the supremacy of government, and oppose the individualism and inherent dignity of man as was historically true of Western culture. Instead, they stress group identity and multiculturalism; and since postmodernists deny the transcendental Judeo-Christian God as did the fascists, there is a strong emphasis on the part of some postmodernists on the revival of the primitive, i.e, natural and New Age religions as was also true in Nazi Germany.

Environmentalism was big among historic fascists, and so today it has become a religion for some. The more extreme environmental groups are even occasionally properly identified as being both radical leftist and fascists.

Historic fascists were fascinated with the human form. Likewise, in our contemporary, postmodern world, there seems to be an obsession with the perfect body and with life extension.

For a citizen in a fascist regime every act is construed as a political act that effects the whole. This is not unlike postmodernists who say, *All life is political.*⁴²

Many postmodernists today would eschew violence, but our culture is rife with violence in the arts, cinema and TV. Veith says

In the 1930s, avant-garde artists shocked the bourgeoisie with their aesthetic theories that glorified violence and the release of primitive emotions. Today, if you like examples of early fascist aesthetics, simply go to the latest Hollywood blockbuster, turn on MTV, or go to a Heavy Metal concert. Here you will see realized the fascists' artistic ideals: pleasure from violence; the thrill of moral rebellion; the cult of the Aryan body. The grisly blood-letting of a slasher movie; the body-builder who takes the law into his own hands by machine-gunning his enemies; the masses of teenagers slam-dancing as Metallica sings 'Scream, as I'm killing you!' --such art is the quintessence of the fascist aesthetic.⁴³

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, philosophical fascism is not dead. It lives on and grows all over the globe.

Only you will never hear it called fascism. Eco says:

We must keep alert, so that the sense of these words will not be forgotten again. Ur-Fascism is still around us, sometimes in plainclothes. It would be so much easier, for us, if there appeared on the world scene somebody saying, "I want to reopen Auschwitz, I want the Black Shirts to parade again in the Italian squares." Life is not that simple. Ur-Fascism can come back under the most innocent of disguises.⁴⁴

I believe Eco is correct and it is not unwarranted to detect elements of fascism in our postmodern culture. As an addendum, I also believe it is incorrect to refer to conservative political groups in this country as having fascist tendencies. Why? They generally do not deny a transcendent deity, they do not hold to an organic view of government, nor are they irrational. They are, however, in some cases, very nationalistic. This alone does not warrant the charge of fascism.

(Since this paper was written two important books on Fascism have been published. The first is by Jonah Goldberg. This book: *Liberal Fascism*, is extremely well-documented, and details how American intellectuals and politicians at the beginning of the 20th Century were enamored with the fascist ideas spawned on the continent. Goldberg's conclusion is that they still are! Nobody of course ever uses or claims to be a fascist, but the ideas are still present in modern liberalism. The synonym for *fascist* today is *corporatism*. The second book: *Nazi Oaks*, by Mark Musser, documents the fascist concern with environmental issues. In addition to the works cited in this paper (the one by Wolin in particular), I would also recommend the fine book by John Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths*. In this book Oswalt effectively shows that the denial of

transcendence is as old as mankind.)

Endnotes

1. Example: during the 2000 presidential election when the State of Florida outcome was in dispute a New York Congressman, Jerry Nadler, remarked that *There is a whiff of fascism in the air.*
2. Zeev Sternhell, *Fascist Ideology*, in *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*, ed. By Walter Laqueur (Berkeley: U of Calif. Press, 1976), p.315.
3. Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Modern Fascism* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), p.26.
4. Richard Wolin, *The Seduction of Unreason* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. xii.
5. Veith, *Modern Fascism*, p. 78.
6. George L. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999), See Chapter 5: *Fascism and the Intellectuals.*
7. Veith, p. 28.
8. Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 145.
9. Sternhell, *Fascist Ideology*, p. 322.
10. Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), p. 2.
11. Veith, p. 32.
12. Wolin, *The Seduction of Unreason*, pp. 32ff.

13. *The Triumph of the Will* was the title of the notable propaganda film by Leni Riefenstahl.
14. Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), pp. 439 ff.
15. See Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *The Genealogy of Morals*.
16. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1973). See pages 3-120.
17. People like Schopenhauer, Goethe, etc.
18. Richard Grunberger, *The 12-Year Reich* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971), p. 482.
19. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution*, p. 117. See also: Dusty Sklar, *The Nazis and the Occult* (New York: Dorset Press, 1977) and, Jean-Michel Angebert, *The Occult and the Third Reich* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1974).
20. Ibid., p. 117.
21. One of these scholars was Friedrich Delitzsch, the founder of Assyriology and son of Franz Delitzsch, noted OT commentator.
22. Grunberger, *The 12-Year Reich*. See Chapter 29.
23. Veith, pp.48-49.
24. Robert Casillo, *The Genealogy of Demons: Anti-Semitism, Fascism, and the Myths of Ezra Pound* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1988), pp. 30-31. Quoted in Veith, p. 45.
25. Carl Cohen, *Communism, Fascism & Democracy* (New York: Random House, 1962), p.262.
26. A. James Gregor. *Phoenix: Fascism in Our Time* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1999) See Chapters 5 and 6.
27. Maurice Cranston, *Fascism, The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vols 3 and 4. P. 183.
28. Quoted by Cohen, *Communism, Fascism & Democracy*, p. 262.

29. As Passmore evidently does. See Kevin Passmore, *Fascism* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2002).
30. Umberto Eco, *Ur-Fascism*, *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 42, Number 11, June 22, 1995. p. 9.
31. Walter Kaufmann, ed. *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: The Viking Press, 1954) pp. 500-501. The quote is from *Twilight of the Idols*.
32. Umberto Eco, *Ur-Fascism*, p. 5.
33. Ibid.
34. Carl Cohen, p. 320.
35. Ibid.
36. Mosse, p. 98.
37. Paul Johnson. *Intellectuals* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988) See Chapter 13.
38. Wolin, p. xii.
39. Veith, p.
40. Peter Berger, and John Neuhaus. *Movement and Revolution* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970) pp. 43-47. Quoted in: Robert Bork *Slouching Towards Gomorrah* (New York; Regan Books, 1996) p. 46-47.
41. The internationalist may not be all that different. He just extends the idea of organicism to an international scale.
42. This quote has been attributed to Hillary Rodham Clinton.
43. Veith, p. 12.
44. Eco, p.10.