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Fascism, Ecology, and the Tangled Roots of Anti-Modernism
20 November 2018

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backward-looking or regressive fascists. The differences involve not only the methodology, tools, and forms assumed by the fascists, but also the vision or inspiration for their anti-modernism."

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"In averting and opposing fascism, it is not enough to assure ourselves that the more barbarous among the fascists were increasingly excluded the greater the height of atrocity reached, needing as it did more sterile, impersonal methods for the feasibility of its implementation. The issue of guiding visions of the fascists is crucial in examining the original impetus for their enterprises."

not be either. The faces of domination and social control that we face today– whether they look like fascism and its fellow travelers or not– may prove to be as distinct from the authoritarian nationalisms of one hundred years ago as those movements were from the waves of traditionalist reaction which pre-existed them by a century. In between our battles and recoveries, in the midst of our faltering, groping attempts to live lives of dignity, to understand our mistakes and our lack, to slip the moorings of Leviathan even here at the end of the world… it remains for us to more fully understand and explain the inducements, the appeals, and the ruses behind this enemy of ours with the familiar face.

—from the 2018 forward

"…a truly haunting specter looms in the world of anarchy, communism, and ecology: the specter of a significant zone of indistinction between those enemies of civilization who regard themselves as anti-authoritarian, and those on the other hand who advocate or– more insidiously– merely succumb to racialism, genocide, and a vision of halcyon days spiked with the poison of the present that it claims to oppose."

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"Here, in the midst of discussing the aspirations of racist technocrats, the resemblance to the anti-industrial and anti-civilizational rhetoric of green anarchists or deep ecologists is striking. However, I posit that there remain irreconcilable differences between an anti-authoritarian critique of civilization and the project of apparently

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"The Undying Appeal of White Nationalism" by Candles and Torches (available on resonanceaudiodistro.org)
"Fascism as Anti-Europe" by Julius Evola
The Nature of Fascism by Roger Griffin
Fascism edited by Roger Griffin
Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler by Roger Griffin
"Why Primitivism (without adjectives) Makes Me Nervous" by Lawrence Jarach (collected in "A Dialog on Primitivism")
"Why I am not an Anti-Primitivist" by Lawrence Jarach
"The Retreat into the Forest" by Ernst Jünger
White Lies White Power: The Fight Against White Supremacy and Reactionary Violence by Michael Novick
Fascism: Comparison and Definition by Stanley G. Payne
A Field Guide to Straw Men by Edelweiss Pirates
Of Indiscriminate Attacks and Wild Reactions by Edelweiss Pirates
Commune Against Civilization by Edelweiss Pirates
The Nazi War On Cancer by Robert N. Proctor
"Apoliteic music: Neo-Folk, Martial Industrial and 'metapolitical fascism'" by Anton Shekhovtsov
The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game by Paul Shepard
Nature and Madness by Paul Shepard
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So much work remains to be done to connect the ideologies and the history of the twentieth century to what we actually experience on the ground, here and now. Life is not static, is not submission. Our terms and pre-conceptions must

5. Implementation of the organic status revolution for a new national Volksgemeinschaft
6. The goal of a completely new kind of racial imperialism on a world scale
7. Stress on new forms of advanced technology in the use of mass media and mass mobilization, a cult of new technological efficiency, new military tactics and technology, emphasis on aerial and automotive technology

This list might be refined and made even more detailed, but as a general formulation it covers the main points. For devotees of colonial and minority-population "national liberation" revolution, it should be pointed out that during World War II the promotion of national liberation movements among colonial and minority peoples around the world was almost exclusively the work of the Axis powers. During his twelve years in power Hitler had a more profound impact on the world than any other revolutionary of the twentieth century, and all the more because, as Eugen Weber and others have pointed out, wars constitute the primary revolutionary processes of this century[…].

Cited/Recommended Works

Modernity and the Holocaust by Zygmunt Bauman

How Deep is Deep Ecology? by George Bradford (pen name of David Watson).

"Walter Benjamin and Ernst Jünger: Destructive Affinities" by Marcus Bullock

Foreword

I wrote this essay about half a decade ago and then promptly forgot about it, more or less, until unearthing it a few days ago. It was written at a time of intense personal duress, and also when so-called "green anarchist" scenes in the Pacific Northwest suddenly began splintering over the issue of neo-fascists in our midst. Things developed quickly, and the same tumult that catalyzed this essay also gave birth to another one, sometime later, called "A Field Guide to Straw Men" about the all-too-comfortable existence of crypto-fascism in Olympia, WA (and the complicity therewith of anarchists, activists, and radicals). Unlike that essay, the present piece doesn't require any knowledge or investment in the relatively insular town scenes of the PNW to fully appreciate.

This writing may be seen as one anarchist's initial and limited attempt to make sense of the ideological conflicts that were then reaching fever pitch, and to address the increasingly common charge that anti-civilization anarchists were in bed with fascists in some more-than-incidental way. Myself a long-time anti-fascist, and having gone "anti-civ" years before, I never imagined that the anti-civilization tendency had anything to do with Europe at all. The question of its affinities with some forms of fascism was an issue to which I had naively devoted almost no thought at all, astonishing as it is to say now, on the other side of these past 5+ years of intense reflection, research, conversation, and street fights.

From my current vantage, the early part of this decade feels like another life. It was the relative beginning of the increasingly potent insurrectionary ferment informed by constant police violence and the failures of leftist mass movements. It was the rise and fall of Occupy. It was a time when the science confirming industrially-induced global climate catastrophe was only partway through its journey from lunatic fringe to mind-numbing, front page banality. It was the end of one

era of near-total aloofness from a mostly hypothetical social upheaval, and the beginning of a new one in which refusal to take sides in the fights erupting everywhere was a luxury many of us couldn't afford, or had no interest in. In sum, these years have been one long "back to the drawing board" kind of moment. And in more ways than one.

In that vein do I make this offering. With its academic style and its inevitable omissions and imperfections notwithstanding, this essay is being released now because I still see it as a worthy preliminary entry in what will prove to be an ongoing discussion about the nature of fascism, anarchism, and modernity. Its subject matter, broadly speaking, is likely to grow in appeal as the alleged "resistance" mobilized by fascistic forces to (post-) modern democratic governance grows more and more insurgent and "green." The framework of the essay draws heavily upon the works of Zygmunt Bauman and Roger Griffin, and includes a look at the ideas of Julius Evola and Ernst Jünger, two major influences on the esoteric and "deep green" variants of fascism, yesterday and today. It also examines the roots of portions of the Green and organic movements of today in German Romanticism's more racist applications of a century ago. Other arguments made or hinted at therein include (but are not limited to):

- that the alleged "anti-modernism" of fascism is, in the main, not genuine. Even the most "green" or "primitivist" iterations of the phenomenon tend to be advocating for an alternative modernity or for a return to a previous or archaic state of civilization, and not for an end to regimes based on domestication, domination, command, and alienation.

- that, nonetheless, disturbing resemblances (even "a zone of indistinction") do indeed exist between certain tendencies in fascism and anarchism.

Truly large scale genocide or mass murder is a prototypical development of the twentieth century, from Turkey to Russia to Germany to Cambodia to Africa. The unique Nazi tactic was to modernize the process, to accomplish the mass murder more efficiently and surgically than other great liquidators in Turkey, Russia, or Cambodia have done. Nor was Hitler's genocidal program any more or less "rational," since the goal of mass murder is always political, ideological, or kind of modern revolutionism. This again is one of the most controverted interpretations of Hitlerism, for since many commentators hold National Socialism to have been anti-modern (normally merely meaning anti-liberal), they argue that it must necessarily have been "reactionary," not revolutionary. Such an approach is held all the more tenaciously by leftist commentators because of their a priori assumption that the concept revolution must refer ipso facto to good revolution, revolution that is positive or creative. But of course revolutions are frequently destructive.

This problem has been approached most directly by Karl Bracher, who has identified the following revolutionary qualities of National Socialism:

1. A supreme new leadership cult of the Fuhrer as the "artist genius"
2. The effort to develop a new Social Darwinist structure of government and society
3. The replacement of traditional nationalism by racial revolution
4. Development of the first new system of state-regulated national socialism in economics

merely carried it to an extreme. The very concept of National Socialism as the "will to create a new man" was possible only in the twentieth-century context as a typically modern, anti-traditional idea. The same may be said of the Nazi search for extreme autonomy, a radical freedom for the German people. Hitler carried the modern goal of breaking the limits and setting new records to an unprecedented point. For no other movement did the modern doctrine of man the measure of all things rule to such an extent.

This also holds with regard to social and economic programs. No ruler in modern times has gone to such lengths as Hitler to acquire, among other things, the natural resources necessary for a modern economy. Nazi Gleichschaltungand the effort at status revolution tended to unite German society and overcome class distinctions for the first time in German history. Though Nazi anti-urbanism is said to have been inherently reactionary, radical anti-urbanism has become a major trend of the late twentieth century. The most radical new communist regimes of the 1970s flaunt their ruralism and anti-urbanism. In fact, though the German war economy promoted de facto urbanization and greater industrialization, rather than the reverse, an ultimate Nazi economic goal was to balance farm and industry. When sought by liberals, this is frequently deemed the height of enlightenment and sophistication. Finally, Hitler was well in advance of his times in his concern about ecology, environmental reform, and pollution.

- that the unbridgeable gulfs between fascist and anarchist visions of life are, at least potentially, more consequential than the resemblances, and every effort should be made by green anarchists to ensure that it is so.

- that the fascist vision of "rebirth" and "renewal," cast in their chosen narratives of nation, race, and people, is a deranged insult to what is possibly a nearly-universal human mythological archetype.

If fascism can be examined as ideology, as movement, and as regime, it can be said that a weakness of this essay is its lack of examination into the second among these terms. Consequently, its pronouncements on the results of fascism perhaps over-emphasize the obviously horrifying culmination of its most infamous and powerful instances as State powers and their projects (in other words, focusing on the "low-hanging fruit" in its argument that fascism is a modernizing phenomenon). As for fascist ideology, the discussion here is good enough to lay some groundwork in our social terrain, in which the "F" word has been so abused and drained of meaning (and by many a Marxist and revolutionary leftist, to boot), but the essay admittedly fails to illuminate the "tangled roots" of the title quite enough. To deploy another naturalist metaphor, this is just the tip of the iceberg.

So much work remains to be done to connect the ideologies and the history of the twentieth century to what we actually experience on the ground, here and now. Life is not static, is not submission. Our terms and pre-conceptions must not be either. The faces of domination and social control that we face today– whether they look like fascism and its fellow travelers or not– may prove to be as distinct from the authoritarian nationalisms of one hundred years ago as those movements were from the waves of traditionalist reaction which pre-existed them by a century. In between our battles and recoveries, in the midst of

our faltering, groping attempts to live lives of dignity, to understand our mistakes and our lack, to slip the moorings of Leviathan even here at the end of the world… it remains for us to more fully understand and explain the inducements, the appeals, and the ruses behind this enemy of ours with the familiar face.

This fight goes three ways, at the least.
Here: a robust, if oblique, opening salvo.

Happy hunting,
an (under)dog in the fight
///Edelweiss Pirates

Intro

In the popular mind as in the academy, in radical political circles as in various subcultural scenes, the phenomenon of fascism is usually identified with an irruption of anti-modern sentiment: an irrational resistance or bucking against the inevitable march of Progress. It is most often conceived of as the intrusion of a resurgent barbarism, a chaotic flight from the civilizing trajectory of History, perhaps even as a kind of return of the repressed.

This view finds apparent reinforcement in a battery of evidence. The first fascists welded together their project in reaction to the crisis experienced in the liberal European democracies of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, galvanized by the apocalyptic shock and trauma of the first total, industrial war in history: the First World War. Fascists, as so many other political entities, channeled the widespread sense of horror and discontentment at the conditions of modernity as fuel for their efforts. Later, with the defeat and collapse of the classical fascist regimes and the inauguration of the post-World War II status quo, various fascist and neo-fascist philosophers levelled critiques against the modern democratic values of their con-

Since Hitlerism is atypical, it has commonly been considered anti-modern in terms of a reductionist definition of modernity based on urbanism, technology, and something that is referred to as "rationality." Yet however extreme, Hitlerism was a symptomatic product of the modern world, and national socialism in various forms the most popular new set of political designs of the twentieth century. As indicated in chapter 2, Hitler's ideas were partly rooted in the modern scientism of German biological and zoological ideas of the late nineteenth century. The Nazi leaders' keen interest in the occult was not directed toward traditional folk superstition so much as toward new modern and racial myths of the supernatural. Hitler in fact rejected nearly all the formal ideas of European culture of the Medieval epoch, above all historical Christianity, and was a stern derider of premodern "superstition." As a matter of fact, Nazi racism was conceivable only in the twentieth century and at no previous time in human history. The animalistic, naturalistic, human anthropology of the Nazis was strictly a modern concept without any pre-modern parallels.

All of Hitler's political ideas had their origin in the Enlightenment —the concept of the nation as a higher historical force, the notions of superior political sovereignty derived from the general will of the people and of the inherent racial differences in human culture. These were distinct derivations from Enlightenment anthropology which rejected pre-modern theology and the common roots and transcendent interests of mankind. The cult of the will is the basis of modern culture, and Hitler

ary idealism, a brand-new creed of redemption, purification, and renewal." Perhaps it is the fate of all of those who find themselves in a relationship of antagonism with modern life to feel themselves a dispossessed people suffering temporary setbacks on their way to a place where they could truly belong. Dwelling as we do in the mangled remains and social quagmire of a dying planet in the (late) modern age, the appeal of this return and this home is widespread and may be interpreted in myriad ways. Because fascists think that this place is a secret home called "Europa" does not disqualify the general phenomenon of this kind of belief from being an innate human capacity for the affective power of a motivating myth. Anarchists who see themselves as engaged in combat against the reactionary, racist, and fascist currents that undeniably surround them need to do all that they can to avoid substantiating the charge of their affinities with fascism. This will prove a delicate task.

Appendix

An excerpt from *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* by Stanley G. Payne

From chapter 4: The Mussolini and Hitler Regimes:

> […] The Hitler regime was so bewildering in its methods and goals that interpretation has frequently given up altogether and fallen back on sheer negatives for understanding—the "revolution of nihilism" or the overriding motivation of "anti-modernism." Hitler and his crew, however repellent, were not nihilists but held tenaciously to firm and evil values. Nihilism is more nearly what came after Hitler, unless sheer hedonism is considered a value rather than the absence of values.

temporaries. Certain of these critiques of liberal, multiculturalist developments in society have distinct anti-modern elements in their content, though perhaps more accurately only in the flavor of those contents.

Other phenomena related to the putative anti-modernism of fascism include: the ostensible influence of pagan and mystical elements on fascist ideology and movements; the survivalist turn of many contemporary rural fascist militia and gang formations in the US; the congeniality of broad swaths of the deep ecology movement (as well as some elements of anarcho-primitivism) toward authoritarian and covertly racist "solutions" to ecological problems or toward excessively essentialist or biologically determinate conceptions of human potential (for example, in matters of gender and sexuality); the origins of "ecology" in the culture of racialist science, and the existence in the rise of the Third Reich of a crusading health reformism informed by anti-industrial ideas. All these and more can be seen as what sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has argued is actually the crass manipulation by fascists of a widespread anxiety about the onset of modernity, an appropriation of what he terms the "anti-modernist rebellion" in order to mobilize an in fact very modern amalgamation of anti-semitic views and authoritarian movements.

In short, a truly haunting specter looms in the world of anarchy, communism, and ecology: the specter of a significant zone of indistinction between those enemies of civilization who regard themselves as anti-authoritarian, and those on the other hand who advocate or– more insidiously– merely succumb to racialism, genocide, and a vision of halcyon days spiked with the poison of the present that it claims to oppose…

The Convoluted (and Spurious?) Nature of Fascism's "Anti-Modernism"

> And so the Jews were caught in the most ferocious of historical conflicts: that between the pre-modern world and advancing modernity. The conflict found its first expression in the overt resistance of the classes and strata of the ancient regime about to be uprooted, disinherited and ploughed out of their secure social locations by the new social order, which they could not but perceive as a chaos. With the initial anti-modernist rebellion defeated and the triumph of modernity no longer in doubt, the conflict would move underground, and in its new latent state would signal its presence in the acute fear of the void, the never-satiated lust for certainty, paranoiac mythologies of conspiracy and the frantic search for ever-elusive identity. Eventually, modernity would supply its enemy with sophisticated weapons only his defeat made possible. The irony of history would allow the anti-modernist phobias to be unloaded through channels and forms only modernity could develop. Europe's inner demons were to be exorcised with the sophisticated products of technology, scientific management and the concentrated power of the state– all modernity's supreme achievements.
> -Zygmunt Bauman

The debate in contemporary anarchism about whether or not anti-modernism and fascism are of a kind– the question of whether or not an anti-modern outlook in and of itself provides ample breeding grounds for nascent or extent fascist tendencies, or if one is necessarily endemic to the other– is a de-

Thus we are facing the realization that questions of breeding are not trivial for political thought, but that they have to be at the centre of all considerations, and that their answers must follow from the spiritual, from the ideological attitude of a people. We must even assert that a people can only reach spiritual and moral equilibrium if a well-conceived breeding plan stands at the very centre of its culture…

The vision of the garden and the barnyard proffered by a husband like Darré is thoroughly demolished by the work of primitivist eco-philosopher Paul Shepard, for one, and many others who locate the genesis of systematic oppression and ecological destruction in the inauguration of sedentary, agricultural society. In this view, the most significant change in human culture is not marked by the transition from pre- to post-industrial society (as dramatic and disastrous as it has proven to be), but in the change from pre-agricultural society to any kind of society based on domestication. In a sense, this is a truer watershed moment demarcating the line between pre-modern culture and modernity. In other words, domesticator societies– whether agricultural, pastoralist, technocratic or other– have more in common with each other than any one of them has in common with the hunter-gatherer lifeway that preceded and, in fewer and fewer places, survived them. Though it is beyond the scope of the present essay, the interpretation of the various iterations of the rebirth myth (a common theme the world over) could, and I would argue should, diverge widely from a fascist line when emanating from this basis.

The relationship of fascism to modernity, still widely perceived as a flight from or assault on the modern world, should instead seem a disturbingly 'natural' manifestation of modern Western society. The impetus for a perfectly designed homeland ensured by complete social control explains why some of the most 'barbaric' acts in history were levelled by "activists who felt they were at the cutting edge of history, pioneers of a new age driven on not by nihilism or cruelty, but by vision-

sonous, technocratic blossom of bureaucratic society we have been examining thus far, and may even be found in a garden bed. The central metaphors for society that the fascists used in their aspirations were the garden, architecture, and medicine. The metaphysics implied by all of these metaphors ultimately contrast deeply with many anarchistic visions of life, particularly those associated with anti-civilization and primitivist anarchism, the tendencies most alleged in our era to have a cryptic but inherent affinity with fascism.

Beyond the core mythic values pertaining to the rebirth of the Nation and the People, the philosophies of the fascists came to largely revolve around concepts of domestication, husbandry, design, and surgical intervention; those of the primitivists revolve around wildness, biodiversity, voluntary association, and self-determination. For Bauman, one of the main tributaries feeding the problem of fascism and its atrocities springs from the fact that, for the fascists, society was a garden (to take just one of the three metaphors mentioned above). None other than Darré himself explicated:

> He who leaves the plants in a garden to themselves will soon find to his surprise that the garden is overgrown by weeds and that even the basic character of the plants has changed. If therefore the garden is to remain the breeding ground for the plants, if, in other words, it is to lift itself above the harsh rule of natural forces, then the forming will of a gardener is necessary, a gardener who, by providing suitable conditions for growing, or by keeping harmful influences away, or by both together, carefully tends what needs tending, and ruthlessly eliminates the weeds which would deprive the better plants of nutrition, air, light, and sun…

bate that can be heard as an echo of the long-running argument on the nature of fascism in the realm of academic studies. Roger Griffin, in his book *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, argues that modernity isn't defined merely by the material aspects associated with the departure from feudalism toward a capitalist system– toward industrialism, the nation-state, rationalization, secularism, and so on– but also by a widely shared sense of standing on the very threshold of history itself, a sense informed by "premodern or 'primordial' ideological and sociological forces" which, in the rapidly changing conditions of the western, Europeanized world from the end of the Middle Ages through the early twentieth century, ended up "precipitating extremely heterogeneous modernist longings for Aufbruch [new beginning]… unleashed by a perceived crisis not just in contemporary society, but in the experience of history and time itself."

Griffin points out that this crisis and the resultant longing for new beginnings was widely reflected in the arts, in the intellectual world, in activism and community initiatives, in revolutionary politics of left as well as right. Significantly, new definitions or refurbishments of the concepts of "rootedness, community, and health" abounded on all sides. Griffin draws upon studies of the arts and literature to demonstrate not only the character but also the ubiquity of these concerns, and insists that their embrace extends to fascism as well. Acknowledging that the eponymous concepts of his book (modernism and fascism) are widely regarded as antithetical, and hence their conjunction as oxymoronic, he contends nevertheless that there is a profound kinship between them. He calls the regimes led by Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler outstanding examples of the modernist state, and writes:

> a key element in the genesis, psychology, ideology, policies, and praxis of fascism was played by the 'sense of a beginning', the mood of standing on the

> threshold of a new world. It is a mood of heady expectancy which is the dialectical twin of the obsession with the closing of an era…"

Furthermore, Griffin posits a distinction between fascism and movements of the far-right generally, and even other variants of ultra-nationalism, and theorizes that the distinguishing factor is bound up with this aforementioned mood of heady expectancy and the way it combines with the other terms in its definition. Rather than ideological uniformity in the particulars of a platform or practice, fascism's coherence, such as it exists, lies within a shared "mythic core": Uniting fascists is the myth of the rebirth of the nation as a racially pure community after a period of perceived liberal degeneracy. This conception lies at the center of the various expressions of fascist ideology whose specific outgrowths or elaborations can and often do contradict each other, or go far beyond this foundation. This myth of rebirth is termed palingenesis by Griffin.

Elsewhere, Griffin defines fascism as "a revolutionary species of political modernism originating in the early twentieth century whose mission is to combat the allegedly degenerative forces of contemporary history (decadence) by bringing about an alternative modernity and temporality (a 'new order' and a 'new era') based on the rebirth, or palingenesis, of the nation." We can add to this definition an identification on the part of its adherents with the People, a likeness of destiny shared by all those who belong to its nation.

The specifically fascist conception of shared destiny and national belonging qualify it as a form of ultra-nationalism: also known as organic or integral nationalism, ultra-nationalism may be distinguished from a sheerly "reactionary" or backward-looking dynastic, monarchical, or even dictatorial principle, pure and simple (although most fascist-style movements indeed end up following demagogic, charismatic

to mitigate the seduction which barbarism held out to his subordinates, and could not afford to let the passions supplant the cool calculus, moral standards, and sanity of the rationally-administered inhumanity which was his charge. Hannah Arendt has written that "by its objectivity, the SS dissociated itself from such 'emotional' types as Streicher, that 'unrealistic fool' and also from certain "Teutonic-Germanic Party bigwigs who behaved as though they were clad in horns and pelts."

Cracks in the Mirror that Flatters Not: Fascism and Anarchy

> The 'overcoming of animal pity' could not be sought and attained through the release of other, base animal instincts; the latter would be in all probability dysfunctional regarding the organizational capacity to act; a multitude of vengeful and murderous individuals would not match the effectiveness of a small, yet disciplined and strictly co-ordinated bureaucracy.
> -Zygmunt Bauman

In averting and opposing fascism, it is not enough to assure ourselves that the more barbarous among the fascists were increasingly excluded the greater the height of atrocity reached, needing as it did more sterile, impersonal methods for the feasibility of its implementation. The issue of guiding visions of the fascists is crucial in examining the original impetus for their enterprises.

Why did the Holocaust leave behind, supercede, and vastly dwarf all of its nearest pre-modern equivalents, exposing them as primitive and wasteful? Whence springs the proclivity for such total social control and rationally-planned extermination? Its seeds are sown much prior to the appearance of the poi-

idea of the Endlosung was an outcome of the bureaucratic culture.

And further on:

> The most shattering of lessons deriving from the analysis of the 'twisted road to Auschwitz is that– in the last resort– the choice of physical extermination as the right means to the task of Entfernung-was a product of routine bureaucratic procedures: means-ends calculus, budget balancing, universal rule application. To make the point sharper still– the choice was an effect of the earnest effort to find rational solutions to successive 'problems', as they arose in the changing circumstances. It was also affected by the widely described bureaucratic tendency to goal-displacement– an affliction as normal in all bureaucracies as their routines. The very presence of functionaries charged with their specific tasks led to further initiatives and a continuous expansion of original purposes. Once again, expertise demonstrated its self-propelling capacity, its proclivity to expand and enrich the target which supplied its raison d'etre.

Not only did the Holocaust never come into conflict with the principles of rationality, but it needed them in order to authorize, routinize, and dehumanize the tasks of which it was composed. Each new step in its process was generated by bureaucracy true to its form and to its purpose, without which it was inconceivable. "The Holocaust was not an irrational outflow of the not-yet-fully eradicated residues of pre-modern barbarity. It was a legitimate resident in the house of modernity; indeed, one who would not be at home in any other house."

Here we find a correspondence with the definitions of Griffin, as Bauman reminds us that Himmler himself sought

leaders, often as a matter of principle). Ultra-nationalism can simultaneously be distinguished from the civic or liberal nationalism put forth by many conservatives and other nationalists of the right by its use of an "organic" or "natural" metaphor to describe those who belong to its nation as well as the relation of the different sectors of society to one another. In other words, the members of the fascist nation and the institutions of its society are seen as something akin to trees in a forest, or cells in a biological tissue. This concept obviously lends itself well to expression as racism, and underlies why neo-fascism in many times and places has wedded itself firmly to white supremacy.

In contrast to the more rationalist, legalistic, and (nominally) non-xenophobic concepts of civic or liberal nationalism, ultra-nationalism largely does not concern itself with individuals as discrete-but-assimilable entities, citizens enjoying equality before a dispassionate, tolerant regime of law, joined together by their shared commitment to the avowed or alleged mainstream of Enlightenment values and their entitlement to common political rights. For fascists, the dominance secured by means of an elevated militarist ethos for those of a common ethnic ancestry (or increasingly, wherever biological racism is discredited, for those of a common cultural orientation, identification, and adherence to the national mythology) is more important than any single individual. Fascism, at least in its phase as insurgent movement, earnestly seeks to involve the whole body of its chosen People (whether subordinated to a "head" represented by a supreme leader or in a more egalitarian formation) in remaking society from top to bottom in a revolutionary or semi-revolutionary thrust. In light of the foregoing, we may conclude with Griffin that the most concise summary of fascism is a palingenetic ("rebirth") form of populist ultra-nationalism.

The central myth of fascism carries with it a profound appeal to which Griffin attributes "strong affective energies

through the evocative force of the image or vision of reality it contains for those susceptible to it." It is due to this profound power that fascist calls for rebirth go much further and are bound to further-reaching changes sought in society than those of even its most closely-related ideological actors (such as authoritarian conservatives, the radical right, or even other kinds of ultra-nationalists), however concerned with the course of the nation they may be. Furthermore, Griffin holds that fascism applies this mythic power to seek cultural, social, and political transformations that indeed can only be guaranteed by a movement committed significantly to modernization, driven by a mindset steeped in modernism, as we shall see.

The cause for confusion about the nature of fascism can be illuminated by a look at the anti-modern sentiments, whether seeming or actual, that have infused or have been yoked to its agenda by a couple of its leading lights: the Traditionalist fascist philosopher Julius Evolaand the "conservative revolutionary" man of letters Ernst Jünger. The precise contours of these thinkers' calls for rebirth exert a seductive pull even today on young, disaffected fascists, but also, and disturbingly, on a large swath of countercultural types, specifically those associated with various subgenres of extreme music such as black metal, neo-folk, and industrial music, and also with the advocates of various forms of extreme ecological activism and sabotage.

Evola was an Italian fascist associated with the avant-garde in his younger days who spearheaded a school of philosophy called Traditionalism. He charged the western world with two thousand years of decadent straying from a grand, "primordial" tradition. This supposedly primordial tradition referred, in Evola's reading of history, to a series of "organic, hierarchically structured, and metaphysically-based States, which, under the leadership of an elite caste of warrior-priests, formed the core of vast empires through which superior races and their

commonplace factors in modern society whose precise combination led to the Holocaust. A power-mad and racist elite was indeed a decisive factor, but it was only one such factor. Even armed with the virulence of its fantasies and passions, there is no way, in isolation from any other of the pernicious enabling elements, that this one could be counted on to carry out genocide.

That task would have to avail itself of one of the unique fruits of modern civilization: bureaucratic organization spawned by the ever-deepening division of labor, endemic to industrial culture. Bauman writes, "Modern civilization was not the Holocaust's sufficient condition; it was, however, most certainly its necessary condition. Without it, the Holocaust would be unthinkable. It was the rational world of modern civilization that made the Holocaust thinkable. 'The Nazi mass murder of the European Jewry was not only the technological achievement of an industrial society, but also the organizational achievement of a bureaucratic society.'"

Bauman takes pains to elaborate the "ethically blind" nature of bureaucracy in its pursuit of efficiency. It is worth quoting Bauman at length to show that mass murder on a scale unprecedented even in the long history of European anti-Semitism,

> depended on the availability of well-developed and firmly entrenched skills and habits of meticulous and precise division of labor, of maintaining a smooth flow of command and information, or of impersonal, well-synchronized co-ordination of autonomous yet complementary actions: on those skills and habits, in short, which best grow and thrive in the atmosphere of the office. The light shed by the Holocaust on our knowledge of bureaucratic rationality is at its most dazzling once we realize the extent to which the very

problem of that culture as such. In a challenge to sociological orthodoxy, he writes, "The implication that the perpetrators of the Holocaust were a wound or a malady of our civilization– rather than its horrifying yet legitimate product– results not only in the moral comfort of self-exculpation, but also in the dire threat of moral and political disarmament."

Bauman points to Helen Fein's book Accounting for Genocide, among others, as exemplary of the orthodox view. In Bauman's summation, Fein argues that human behavior is yoked to decent or moral behavior by the codes that civilization puts into place. Pre-social or antisocial and inhuman drives which, in Fein's estimation, spring eternal, need to be curbed by the rationalizing, and hence humanizing, influence which the civilized social organization exerts:

> Whatever moral instinct is to be found in human conduct is socially produced. It dissolves once society malfunctions. 'In an anomic condition– free from social regulation– people may respond without regard to the possibility of injuring others.' By implication, the presence of effective social regulation makes such disregard unlikely. The thrust of social regulation– and thus of modern civilization, prominent as it is for pushing regulative ambitions to limits never heard of before– is the imposition of moral constraints on otherwise rampant selfishness and inborn savagery of the animal in man [...] the message [is] that the Holocaust was a failure, not a product, of modernity.

Bauman argues instead that the emancipation of the modern political nation state and its monopoly on the use of legitimate violence contributed to the dismantling of all non-political power resources and institutions of social self-management. The outcome was the interplay of several

superior values prevailed." His thwarted dream was for the fascists to rectify their straying from this Tradition and set the stage for a Europe united along the lines of the last of such States: the Roman Empire.

Evola broke with what he considered the un-aristocratic, "demagogic" forces within fascist movements, studying Eastern mystical traditions at length and eventually employing his findings in a host of reproachful but ultimately constructive criticisms of the Fascist and Nazi regimes. He wrote extensively and with vast erudition, including a book entitled Revolt Against the Modern World which was published in German in 1935 and presented to the SS , and a document called Synthesis of Racial Doctrine which he penned for Mussolini's regime in 1941.

Ernst Jünger was a highly decorated German officer in the First World War who came to be highly regarded in mainstream German literary circles as well as highly influential to both fascists and neo-fascists. In so many written works he "proclaimed the virtues of heroic conflict as a way of participating in the mythic essence of the cosmos." In "The Retreat into the Forest", Jünger critiques increasing automation in modern society and its corollaries of anxiety, fear and lack of freedom. He denounces the repressive measures that the "tremendous wrecking enterprise" of civilization, which he calls "Leviathan" (in a sort of detournement of Hobbes' term, later deployed as well by anarcho-primitivist Fredy Perlman), brings to bear against any intransigent rebels who would seek to re-conquer freedom. He lambasts a mass society which uses coercion to reduce the aspirations of all to a lowest common denominator of mediocrity, predicated upon an absence of tradition or excellence. He argues for the re-arising of myth in the course of struggle against this state of affairs (in places providing a sort of cursory philosophical underpinning for the survivalism commonly associated with fascism), problematizes the increasingly coercive and interrogatory nature of the

modern state's inquiry into the activities of people and, with references to David and Goliath among others, he invokes the underdog in the service of an almost populist sentiment which describes the modern age encroaching upon common or average people.

Jünger mentions restoration of "the riches of the soil," and going "beyond all civilization," and even uses the metaphor of an ever-deepening and widening desert harbored within as well as around the modern subject. Jünger problematizes the values of modern society as decadent, refers the reader to a prior era of noble values, and uses the Titanic and the Leviathan as metaphors for civilization. He advocates simultaneously "staying on shipboard" (that is, acting for these all-but-vanished noble values while remaining in the heart of civilization) as well as the eponymous retreat into the forest to re-orient oneself to Being.

While the decadence of the contemporary world and the desire to heal its corruption arguably play a role in any radical political ideology, ideas such as those of Evola and Jünger, which provided some measure of inspiration for the participants in the regimes under Mussolini and Hitler, "were myths that generated policies and actions designed to bring about collective redemption, a new national community, a new society, a new man. Their goal was rebirth, a 'palingenesis' brought about not through suprahuman agency, but engineered through the power of the modern state." The rebirth held out for by these philosophers not only conforms to the key definitional component of fascism, but represents "the element that in the extreme conditions of inter-war Europe could endow some variants of nationalism and racism with extraordinary affective and destructive power."

Despite the appearance of fascist overtures like those of Evola and Jünger of hearkening back to a prior era of health and vitality in the nation's past, fascism is in a very important sense profoundly anti-conservative, even if reactionary in

> he cited Kant and Nietzsche in support of his thesis that suffering was an inevitable accompaniment of progress. Civilization was "merely technical"; culture, by contrast, was the patterning of human relationships according to values. Civilization had to do with means, culture with ends. Yet culture could not be the highest value; that honor went to biological "race" – hence the moral imperative of racial hygiene.

Here, in the midst of discussing the aspirations of racist technocrats, the resemblance to the anti-industrial and anti-civilizational rhetoric of green anarchists or deep ecologists is striking. However, I posit that there remain irreconcilable differences between an anti-authoritarian critique of civilization and the project of apparently backward-looking or regressive fascists. The differences involve not only the methodology, tools, and forms assumed by the fascists, but also the vision or inspiration for their anti-modernism.

To illustrate the point, it will be necessary to summarize some of the main arguments of Zygmunt Bauman in his book Modernity and the Holocaust. Here may be found some of the reasons why a critique of the poisonous influence of civilization cannot be confined to the province of fascist and proto-fascist ideology. On the contrary, just such a critique can be seen to underlie a very significant and all but overlooked critique of fascism, specifically in its manifestation in the Holocaust.

Bauman is a sociologist who argues, in profound contention with his milieu of origin, that the Holocaust is not to be understood as a failure of the civilizing process or influence of modern society or as a resurgence of the barbarism of the past, but as a consequence of that society's trajectory toward social control. Since the Holocaust was born and executed in our modern rational society, at a high stage of technical civilization, it is a

these substances and various cancers and maladies. Furthermore, cancer was termed a "disease of civilization" and condemned with the zeal of any back-to-the-lander, advocate of simple living, or contemporary progressive food critic of today. What Proctor calls the "romantic Right" in Germany was far more likely to discuss the dangers of industry, modernity and luxury than the "technocratic Left" and to raise the specter of an epidemic increase in cancer levels as symptomatic of the general poisonousness and stress of modern living.

Reaching further back in German history, we find the influence of the Romantic movement extending to renowned scientist Ernst Haeckel who coined, among others, the term "ecology" itself in 1866. He also had racist and proto-fascist political tendencies, espousing not only the idea that interactions with the environment shape the evolution of different races, but that there was an inherent hierarchy which applied to the human races based on their use-inheritance of different languages. He became a leading proponent of scientific racism. He was one of the first to propose making euthanasia available for terminally-ill cancer patients.

This reveals a correspondence that many will find counter-intuitive between, for example, conscientious health radicals of our own day and the murderous medical forerunners of the most infamous totalitarian regime in modern history. Proctor writes:

> Part of what has to be understood in this context is the romantic Right's more general fear of "civilization." The racial hygienist Fritz Lenz had argued in a widely read essay of 1917 ("The Renewal of Ethics" – which he once claimed to have anticipated the leading elements of Nazi philosophy) that the growth of technology had brought with it an alienation from nature. Lenz felt that society's abundance of goods had only led to abuse;

some sense of the word. The poor understanding of this fact contributes, Griffin laments, to "the blatant paradoxes persistently generated by so much scholarship on the topic, such as Henry Turner's insistence on fascism's 'anti-modern utopianism' and Jeffrey Herf's investigation of the 'reactionary modernism' which allegedly resulted when hardcore Nazi conservatives wholeheartedly embraced the modern technocracy." In order to explain the apparent paradoxes further, Griffin writes:

> … it is precisely because fascism was an intrinsically modernist phenomenon that it could host some forms of aesthetic modernism as consistent with the revolutionary cause it was pursuing, and condemn others as decadent, as well as imparting a modernist dynamic to forms of cultural production normally associated with backward looking 'reaction' and nostalgia for past idylls […] a regime that celebrates the past in the name of the future, or where occultists daily rub shoulders with engineers and scientists in pursuit of racial regeneration, should come to seem fully compatible with modernism, no matter how vehemently it rejects particular permutations of modernity promoted as progressive by liberal or 'Enlightenment' humanism.

Fascism as the Offspring of Modern Civilization

> Some forms of fascist myths are radically anti-urban, anti-secular and/or draw on cultural idioms of nostalgia for a pre-industrial idyll of heroism, moral virtue or racial purity. However, even in these cases it is only the allegedly degenerative

> elements of the modern age which are being rejected. Fascism's essentially palingenetic, and hence anti-conservative, thrust toward a new type of society means that it builds rhetorically on the cultural achievements attributed to former, more 'glorious' or healthy eras in national history only to invoke the regenerative ethos which is a prerequisite for national rebirth, and not to suggest socio-political models to be duplicated in a literal-minded restoration of the past. It thus represents an alternative modernism rather than a rejection of it. Thus when a fascist text bears the title 'Revolt against the Modern World', as in the case of Evola (1934), it is the decadent features of modernity that are being attacked in order to outline the prospect of a totally different type of society. When used in fascist scholarship, 'anti-modern' invariably betrays a set of value judgements about what constitutes the ideal path of modernization for societies to follow and thus assumes a teleological myth of its own which makes it highly dubious as a useful ideal type for analyzing alternative ideologies. Phrases such as 'reactionary modernism' or 'modernist anti-modernism' point to the degree of confusion which can still arise when scholars try to make sense of the presence in some strands of fascism of such an obviously anti-traditionalist element as the celebration of technology, when they have not recognized the centrality to it of the myth of renewal.
>
> -Roger Griffin

As it turns out, "the Green movement" has at least a significant cluster of its roots in National Socialism. Walther Darré

was the name of Hitler's minister of agriculture for a time in the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP), the Nazi party. According to anti-racist activist and author Michael Novick, US neo-nazis such as Gary Gallo (who ran an organization called The National Democratic Front and published a racist newspaper in the 90's) "credit Darré with inventing the slogan 'Blood and Soil' in his effort to rejuvenate the 'Nordic sub-race,' [declare] him to be an early proponent of the 'small is beautiful' theory, and [attribute] to him the origination of the term 'organic farming' to apply to growing food without pesticides or chemical fertilizers."

Darré deployed his expertise in animal breeding and husbandry techniques in his scheme for national renewal, which involved placing a genetically healthy peasant stock at the center of national life, securing its land ownership, and protecting it from the "corrosive effects of urbanization and industrial capitalism (both closely identified with the Jews)." Griffin explains, "His schemes were not only utopian, but conflicted with the massive industrialization demanded by the Nazi war-machine. Nevertheless, his slogan 'Blood and Soil' had made a significant contribution to the rationale for the systematic inhumanity and destructiveness carried out by the Third Reich."

On a related note, in a study of medicine under the Nazi regime called The Nazi War on Cancer, Robert N. Proctor shows that a significant number of commonplace health reforms which today are considered socially responsible and progressive have their origins in the Third Reich. He argues that these measures were vigorously pursued due to the same logic which lead to the infamous, ghastly medical horrors of cruel experimentation and forced "euthanasia", among others, and ultimately to the extermination millions of humans in pursuit of a pure "Aryan" race.

In the course of his study, Proctor reveals that Nazi doctors vociferously crusaded against things like smoking and alcohol consumption, establishing some the first links between use of