

The palingenetic core of generic fascist ideology

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Professor Roger Griffin
Department of History
Oxford Brookes University
Gipsy Lane Campus
Headington Oxford OX3 0BP

It is a curious paradox that, even if Mussolini's regime itself was far from pursuing a consistent policy of autarky in the sphere of cultural production, Italy's post-war academic industry has generally displayed an intransigently protectionist attitude to foreign models of generic fascism.¹ This has certainly spared the country being flooded with inferior intellectual products. At the same time it has kept out some advanced heuristic tools which in the right hands might have led to long overdue revisions in the conventional ways Italians, both inside and outside the intelligentsia, conceptualize the place which the 'ventennio fascista' occupies in national and European history.² A sign of the 'fuso orario' that has opened up between the domestic and foreign market of ideas in this sector is that the very term 'generic fascism', so central in the Anglophone social sciences to distinguishing between (Italian) Fascism and 'fascism' as an ideological genus existing on a par with 'socialism' or 'liberalism', still grates on the Italian ear, and has to be translated into such gauche paraphrases as 'il fascismo inteso come genere' or 'il fascismo concepito in senso generale'.³

It was only after I had cut my political science teeth on (Italian) Fascism and then become through marriage part of an extended Italian (Genovese) family, that I embarked on an odyssey through numerous modern political cultures in the quest for the legendary 'fascist minimum'. Thus to be asked to provide an outline of my theory directed specifically to an Italian readership and professionally translated into Italian is a sort of home-coming. I would ask the reader to assess mine no differently from the chapters contributed by more recognized historians and social

scientists in this volume:⁴ in the best tradition of wine-tasting it should at least be given time to leave a bouquet in the mouth before being spat out. To pursue the analogy further, my own contribution might be compared to an Australian wine from a recently established vineyard, rather than a vintage *di origine controllata*. It will hopefully prepare those unfamiliar with my work for its distinctive flavour if I place it within the context of a significant development which I believe has taken place in the last decade within the convoluted debate concerning the existence and nature of ‘generic fascism’, a topic over which enormous quantities of printer’s ink and cartridge toner have been consumed since 1945.

When I entered the debate as an *ingénu* some ten years ago articles and essays on generic fascism regularly opened with a ritual lament about the chronic lack of consensus on even the most basic definitional issues raised by the concept. Every attempt made by a non-Marxist scholar since the 1920s to offer a way out of the conceptual labyrinth posed by fascism seemed only to have enlarged and complicated it further, with the result that historians attempting to study aspects of the generic phenomenon ‘idiographically’ were generally at a loss as to which ‘expert’ to turn for a working definition (most chose wisely to avoid the subject altogether). In the course of the 1990s the situation changed beyond recognition. Certainly books repackaging conventional Marxist orthodoxies⁵ or perpetuating the traditional confusion⁶ are still published sporadically, and every so often the debate is enlivened by the appearance of a monograph offering a maverick approach.⁷ But there has been an unmistakable tendency for recent contributions both to conceptualizing fascism, and, just as important, to understanding concrete aspects of its historical manifestation, to converge on a cluster of axioms. It would appear that, at least for the present fascism is, as the academic Newspeak would have it, becoming a less ‘contested’ concept.⁸

The broad area of scholarly consensus⁹ which now exists, admittedly one with highly fuzzy boundaries, is that: *fascism is best approached as a genuinely revolutionary, trans-class form of anti-liberal, and in the last analysis, anti-conservative nationalism. As such it is an ideology deeply bound up with modernization and modernity, one which has assumed a considerable variety of external forms to adapt itself to the particular historical and national context in which*

it appears, and has drawn on a wide range of cultural and intellectual currents, both left and right, anti-modern and pro-modern, to articulate itself as a body of ideas, slogans, and doctrine. In the inter-war period it manifested itself primarily in the form of an elite-led 'armed party' which attempted, mostly unsuccessfully, to generate a populist mass movement through a liturgical style of politics and a programme of radical policies which promised to overcome the threat posed by international socialism, to end the degeneration affecting the nation under liberalism, and to bring about a radical renewal of its social, political and cultural life as part of what was widely imagined to be the new era being inaugurated in Western civilization. The core mobilizing myth of fascism which conditions its ideology, propaganda, style of politics, and actions is the vision of the nation's imminent rebirth from decadence.

It was ultimately the change of ethos and paradigm that has made it part of 'common sense' to take fascist ideology seriously as a genuinely revolutionary form of nationalism which gave the fruits of my own research a sufficiently appetizing flavour for them not to be discarded as swiftly as some other interpretations.¹⁰ If my approach has acquired an ephemeral importance at a formative stage in the current evolution of the debate, it has lain in two areas. Firstly, in drawing attention to the centrality to fascism's ideological dynamics of the myth of national rebirth (and in doing so presenting a considered theoretical case for treating this myth as the elusive 'fascist minimum'). Secondly, in demonstrating the heuristic value of the definition of fascism which results by supplying a stream (or rather a steady drip) of publications where it forms an integral part of the conceptual framework used to investigate empirically a wide range of issues relating to generic fascism. Some of these are extremely broad 'the ideology of fascism,¹¹ the history of the debate over fascism's definition,¹² the relationship between fascism and the theatre¹³ or religion,¹⁴ 'fascism' as an entry in an encyclopaedia¹⁵ ' others highly specific: the underlying cohesion of Fascist¹⁶ and Nazi¹⁷ art policies, the temporal revolution induced by Nazi ritual politics,¹⁸ the fascist ideology of a French groupuscule,¹⁹ the debt of the programme of the Alleanza Nazionale²⁰ or the Nouvelle Droite²¹ to 'historic fascism'.

A full exposition of the theoretical basis for all such undertakings is to be found in my first book, *The Nature of Fascism*,²² which at the time of its publication

(1991) seemed yet another ‘maverick’ attempt to resolve what was still universally regarded as the intractable ‘fascist conundrum’. It is somewhat ironic, then, if the subsequent emergence of the new paradigm can now make that book appear part of an orthodoxy, or even ‘groundbreaking’, rather than what it was easy to dismiss as at the time: an over-ambitious, over-condensed, highly idiosyncratic, jejune attempt to resolve the whole of the fascist debate in one fell swoop: ‘Everything you ever wanted to know about fascism and never dared to ask’. But though *The Nature of Fascism* had many of the characteristic faults of books based on doctorates, it also had some features which I hope will stand the test of time (which in the postmodern age means a few years at most!).

First, no matter how heavy-going it is to read, chapter one was original in offering an analysis, heavily indebted to Max Weber’s methodological precepts, of why the debate over the definition of fascism had been so convoluted, focusing attention on the ideal-typical nature of all generic concepts in the social sciences. It argued that as a generic concept ‘fascism’ could have no empirical essence to serve as the basis of an objective definition: the ‘fascist minimum’ had to be invented ‘not discovered’ through a process of ‘idealizing abstraction’. The dialogue of the deaf into which much of the debate over fascism had degenerated in the past was attributable to the naive methodological realism which led most participants to treat their own theory as ‘true’, rather than as a heuristic device to be judged solely in terms of its usefulness as a tool for empirical research. I still consider the recognition of the essentially ‘imagined’ and experimental nature of any definition of fascism a vital premise to the spirit of openness which must prevail in fascist studies for them to progress without the dogmatism and small-mindedness which have often been displayed in the past. The Tarzan/ Godzilla-like enmity which occasionally breaks out over the definition of fascism between academics with vulnerable male egos is particularly unfortunate given the topic they are working on.

Second, the ideal type offered in *The Nature of Fascism* seems retrospectively to have captured the spirit of the embryonic new consensus both with its Spartan, ‘autarchic’ simplicity, and with the central emphasis it put on rebirth. After decades of theories of fascism which at best offered elaborate check-lists of its main features, and at worst took the form of discursive descriptions, not

to say impressionistic ramblings, which denied it any discernible definitional contours, here the whole phenomenon was synthesized into a single sentence:

Fascism is a political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism.

As the subsequent ‘unpacking’ of the sentence made clear, the claim made in this ideal type was that the ideological driving force of fascism which informs all its empirical manifestations (organization, style, policies, behaviour, ethics, aesthetics etc.) and determines its relationship with existing political, social and cultural realities, including rival ideologies, is the vision of the nation being capable of imminent phoenix-like rebirth from the prevailing crisis and decadence in a revolutionary new political and cultural order embracing all the ‘true’ members of the national community. In my more manic, Nietzschean moments I considered this single sentence the social scientific equivalent of a formula in mathematics or physics. Its profound implications for understanding fascism would be made increasingly transparent by my book to the point where the definition acted in the head of the reader like a scimitar slashing through the tangled Gordian knot of controversy which down through the years had formed round the concept fascism.

Though ‘palingenetic ultranationalism’ has only rarely had such an epiphanic effect on actual readers, it was gratifying to find that when Eatwell and Payne subsequently published their own monographs on fascism they also provided a succinct, one sentence definition. In fact, unless academic testosterone is distorting my judgement, I believe any new theory of fascism should meet the challenge of being summarizable in a sentence if it is not to be a work of obfuscation rather than clarification. (The most recent offerings from Laqueur, Renton, and Gregor all failed this test, and it will be interesting to see how well forthcoming contributions due to be made to the debate by Robert Paxton, Robert Soucy, and David Baker fare in this respect.)

Like any ideal type, my definition results from the act of simplifying and ordering in the charmed realm of utopian thought phenomena which are irreducibly complex and messy in their natural habitat of external reality. This has led at least

one eminent academic (who should have known better) to accuse me of an ‘essentialist’ approach to fascism. However, as is explicitly stated in the book, a corollary of the ideal-typical nature of any definition of fascism is the realization that there is no mysterious essence waiting to be discovered which will constitute the ‘fascist minimum’. Some other scholars have had a similar reaction to the highly schematic theoretical sections of *The Nature of Fascism* when they criticize it for losing contact with the concrete historical realities of fascism. This is an unfortunate impression to have created, since the concept ‘palingenetic ultra-nationalism’ was originally ‘abstracted’ from an extensive body of raw material, namely hundreds of primary source texts relating to the ideology, propaganda, and policies of Fascism, Nazism, and a wide selection of abortive inter-war and post-war ‘putative fascist’ movements. The prevalence of the rebirth myth being projected onto the nation, of an obsession with degeneration and regeneration as socio-historical realities, is objectively demonstrable through textual analysis in primary sources relating both to Fascism and to all movements identified by my ideal type as having a structural kinship with it at an ideological level. A minute sample of this empirical material is to be found in the documentary reader *Fascism* which appeared in 1995. The exclusive concentration on ideology as the basis of the new ideal type of fascism was bound to create an ‘ahistorical’ feel to the analysis (though it is applied historically in chapters three to six), but certainly were I to rewrite the book I would take care to establish the prevalence of the rebirth myth in Fascist nationalism before extrapolating it into an ideal type of generic fascism as a whole.

All key three terms of the synthetic definition have also caused problems. Some academics (and numerous students) have objected to the obscure, jargonous ring of ‘palingenetic’, which must be a matter of intellectual taste, because as a conceptual tool for analysing ideologies all too often loosely qualified as ‘apocalyptic’ or ‘millennarian’ (which have misleading religious connotations) it sounds pleasingly precise to me, despite its unfamiliarity in English. In this respect Italian readers are at an advantage, since ‘palingenesi’ and ‘palingenetico’ are part of the active vocabulary of a number of native writers on Fascism (notably Emilio Gentile). More importantly, it is necessary to stress that, as pointed out in *The Nature of Fascism*, the term is used within the framework of my ideal type to

connote 'rebirth' not in the sense of restoration of what has been, which is an archetypal conservative utopia, but of a 'new birth' which retains certain eternal principles (e.g. 'eternal' Roman, Aryan, or Anglo-Saxon virtues) in a new, modern type of society.

'Populist' is also a multivalent term which has been criticized for being excessively vague. In fact I deliberately chose to use it shorn of any specific historical associations as a generic term for the 'people power' generated when enough of the 'masses' are effectively mobilized by mythic energies, whether spontaneous or contrived (as when appeals by the Front National or the Austrian Freedom Party to xenophobia are called 'populist'). Another objection is that fascism's alleged populism does not square with the hierarchical concept of society embodied in the leader cult so conspicuous in the fascism of the inter-war period. However, the contradiction resolves itself into a paradox when it is realized that the regenerated national or ethnic community which fascists aspire to create is conceived in a profoundly anti-egalitarian spirit. The vehicle of revolutionary awakening may be the 'whole people' (or rather all those deemed to be healthy members of it), rather than a particular class or social group. However, in the nation's current state of decadence the majority are 'asleep', contaminated by 'alien', i.e. patricidal or ethnicidal values, so that, as with Leninism, a vanguard is necessary to undertake the heroic task of spreading the vision and seizing power. In the new regime some of the vanguard of the 'movement' will become the new ruling elite, a 'natural elite' based not on class, power, or wealth, but on their degree of commitment to the ultimate vision of the new national order and their value to its realization. A deep ambivalence towards the 'masses' as both credulous sheep and potential heroes is thus intrinsic to fascism. I would argue, however, that even a right-wing visionary as fundamentally elitist and anti-modern as Julius Evola still wants the *whole* of society to be reborn from decadence through a revolutionary revival of the Tradition brought about by a *new* 'spiritual' elite to create a *new* era in European society, rather than the literal restoration of an earlier cultural empire under the aegis of an old ruling class or institution. This is why Evola's voluminous writings bear the stamp of a fascist rather than a conservative mindset, which has enabled to have such an extraordinary impact on post-war neo-fascist thinking both activist and metapolitical.²³

The subtleties of the term ‘ultra-nationalism’ have also been lost on some colleagues. I intended it to denote not just an overtly anti-liberal, anti-parliamentary form of nationalism (which precludes the palingenetic patriotism of a De Gaulle, a Thatcher, or even a Yeltsin from being fascist), but to embrace the vast range of ethnocentrism which arise from the intrinsic ambiguities of the concept ‘nation’, and from the many permutations in which racism can express itself as a rationalized form of xenophobia. It is this multivalence and flexibility which accounts for the way my ‘fascist minimum’ covers the various concepts of the Italian race accommodated by Fascism just as well as the Euro-fascism (‘Europe of a hundred flags’) which has become so important since the war. In doing so it embraces an idea which most forms of Euro-fascism now subsume, namely that of homogeneous ethnic communities or *ethnies* rather than nation-states as the basic unit of healthy culture. Ultra-nationalism can also apply to the biologically determinist racism (often misleadingly equated with racism *tout court*) and displayed in Nazism, as well as in some elements within the Romanian Iron Guard, the British Union of Fascists, and the Hungarian Arrow Cross (which in each case existed alongside ‘cultural’ and ‘spiritual’ dialects of racism much closer to the dominant Fascist types). The criticism that my ideal type does not fit Nazism because it was racist rather than nationalist, for example, is ill considered, and overlooks the point that in Nazi thought the German nation and the German race were practically coterminous. Moreover, to deny that the appeal to the nationalism of ordinary Germans in the sense of an inordinate love of their own culture did not play a major role in the social engineering of the Third Reich smacks of bad faith rather than ignorance.

This last point touches on another feature of my ideal type which has led to misunderstandings. Since it is based on the ideological testimony of fascist ideologues and propagandists, it delivers a definition of fascism that corresponds to the way fascists see themselves, and reflects something of the positive image which they see in the mirror by highlighting their idealistic belief that they are defending noble values and aspiring to worthwhile goals. I would argue that unless the researcher takes account of the affective power of this belief, the acts which fascists commit or become party to and the events they promote or find themselves involved in remain unintelligible. Yet this approach has laid me open to the charge of ‘revisionism’, of

wanting in some way to dignify fascism with a rationale and hence to justify it. It is sad to have to reiterate that my urge to understand the ideological dynamics of fascism by taking seriously the sentiments of its protagonists has just as little to do with rationalizing or condoning it as the commitment of a medical researcher to establishing the etiology of a form of cancer has with trying to spread it. Indeed, I would have hoped that it was clear from the tone of my writings that in my own small way, however naively, I am trying to contribute to the defence of humanistic values by providing a clearer identikit of one of its many ideological enemies (which, as my work stresses, was not conveniently laid to rest in April 1945).

Other misgivings are more pardonable. Two arise directly from the attempt, practically unthinkable before the new consensus, to base a definition of fascism exclusively on its ideology, so bringing it in line with every other major political, social, and religious 'ism' of the modern age. I did not make sufficiently clear one corollary of this approach, namely that the ultra-nationalism has to be an explicit part of a regime's official doctrine for it to fit my ideal type. The point has not been lost on some that every communist state from Russia and Romania to China and North Korea has not only preached the appearance of a new era, and a new man, but has behaved ultra-nationalistically in its foreign policy and social engineering. Yet even if in practice they have thus pursued a programme of 'palingenetic ultra-nationalism', this is far from qualifying them as fascist states in terms of my ideal type, because their charter myth remained officially Marxist-Leninist internationalism. In theory capitalism was in its death throes, not the nation. Socialism was the phoenix of the old order, not the nation.

Another understandable fallacy is to assume that my theory plays down the importance of other overt traits of a fascist regime or movement, such as its anti-socialism, *dirigiste* economics and social policy, imperialism, militarism, leader cult, or the compromise with traditional conservatism. However important these may be at the level of concrete history, my theory relegates them to 'accidental' aspects of fascism which can arise when an attempt is made to realize the fascist utopia, and have no place in the fascist minimum. This is a major point of difference with Stanley Payne's tripartite 'typological description' and single-sentence definition, both of which refer to ideological, organizational and 'stylistic' aspects of fascism

which I believe to be contingent on the peculiar ethos of the inter-war period rather than intrinsic to fascism itself (and hence ‘timeless’). This is especially true of such features as the leader cult, paramilitarism, theatrical politics, territorial expansionism, and corporatist economics.

This last point relates to one of the major advantages which I consider my ideal type offers over rival models (clearly parents are predisposed to think their baby is the most beautiful in the world, and I cannot help being more conscious of the merits of my approach than its weaknesses). Removing the top layers of generic fascism’s contingent features to expose its ideological bedrock of ‘palingenetic ultra-nationalism’ enables it to be identified despite its protean capacity to assume so many external disguises and adapt to so many changing historical circumstances. It frees fascist studies from the fixation with a particular manifestation of fascism (in particular Fascism, Nazism, or a curious blend of both) as the template of all other fascisms, stressing instead how these were but historically contingent permutations of the generic phenomenon. It throws into relief the underlying relationship at the level of ‘world view’ or cosmology between Fascism and Nazism, and the profound differences between these two and Franco’s Spain, Vichy France, imperial Japan, or Pinochet’s Chile, or that matter between the PNF and the NSDAP on the one hand and the Front National, the Lega Nord, or the Austrian Freedom Party on the other, the last three of which are insufficiently ultra-nationalist or palingenetic (or both) to be fascist. On the other hand, the heuristic use of the concept allows the fascist mindset to be discerned still actively at work in some post-war pro-European groupuscules, cultural study groups, and purely virtual Websites with no overt link to Fascism or Nazism, no uniformed paramilitary cadres, some of which actually boast of their anti-racist, anti-nationalist, anti-fascist, and apolitical (or rather ‘metapolitical’) credentials.

Operating with a minimalist concept of fascism as a political ideology arguably has other merits too as a heuristic device. It highlights the existence of the mythopoeic matrix which determines how the ideology of a particular form of fascism has often been synthesized from a bewildering range of ideas, both left and right, conservative and anti-conservative, national and supranational, rational and anti-rational. It also illuminates the structural reason for fascism’s ambivalent

relationship with modernity, for example the coexistence within Fascism of nostalgia for the Roman past with the embrace of aeronautics, and the cult of blood and soil with the development of rocket technology under the Nazis: the protagonists of all such ideological elements believed they were contributing to the rebirth of the nation, and shared a common goal with other believers in 'the cause', even if their interpretations of the values and tactics which would achieve it differed. In similar vein, the emphasis on the deeply mythic palingenetic component of fascism which assumes a dialectical relationship between decay and renewal, death and rebirth throws into relief the indissoluble link between fascist destruction and fascist creation. It is a nexus of ideas and images central to the fascist mindset, one which informs the Fascist obsession with sacrifice and redemption as much as it binds Nazism's cult of physical health to its programmes of 'euthanasia' and genocide.

My defensive response to misunderstandings of my theory seems to have gradually turned into an aggressive advertising campaign for it. Since these words are directed to an Italian readership, it is thus worth concluding with a bald summary of the most important features of Fascism which are thrown into relief when my theory is used as an integral part of the conceptual framework used for investigating it. For one thing, Fascism, far from being ideologically vacuous, is revealed as saturated with mythic energies. Mussolini, for example, despite his notorious fickleness at the level of doctrine throughout his career, stayed remarkably faithful to a vision of national rebirth which he developed out of his Marxist revisionism through his contact with Voceanism in the late 1900s. It was this ideology in the sense of a mobilizing myth which formed the nucleus around which a wide range of conflicting currents of palingenetic ultranationalism could form themselves into a loose alliance held together organizationally first by the movement, then by the regime.²⁴ Fascism is thus to be seen ideologically as a constantly evolving constellation of fascisms rather than a static, monolithic whole.

In addition, my ideal type suggests that 'fascism' became the generic term for populist palingenetic ultranationalism because Fascism was the first organized form of this new ideological compound to succeed in entering a national political arena and in forming a regime. Revolutionary nationalists who aspired to awaken 'the whole people' elsewhere sensed the underlying kinship with Mussolini's movement

despite the enormous surface differences which separated it from their vision as a result of the uniqueness of the history and the political cultures of the nations concerned. In particular, it is the fact that Nazism had a core of palingenetic ultranationalism rather than sheer pragmatism which conditioned the alliance which came about between the New Italy and the Third Reich, despite the gulf that separated the countries in so many other respects.

The ideal type of 'palingenetic ultranationalism' also can be shown to cast a fresh light on the historical conditions of socio-political crisis as the preconditions for the mass appeal of a creed promising a radical new beginning, a 'new Italy'. Furthermore it points to the deeper rationale behind the liturgical style of politics which, as Emilio Gentile has shown so brilliantly,²⁵ became such an essential part of the Fascist 'style' of politics. It arose spontaneously from the bid, half manipulative and half idealistic, to induce the subjective experience in Italians that they were living in an epic new era. Fascist ritual dramatized the myth that the age of liberalism had finally been transcended in a new type of state made possible by the genius of the Italians and of Mussolini. In October 1922 Italian history had literally begun anew. Fascist totalitarianism can thus be seen not as an end in itself, but as the means to bring about a collective revolution of consciousness. The same ideal type also sheds light on the ultimate reasons why the Fascist vision eventually turned into a historical catastrophe. Both the fascist imagining of the organic, heroic nation and the archetypal image of rebirth are equally projections of human mythopoeia. They combine in Fascism to generate an intrinsically utopian form of politics in which the reality principle is constantly overridden by the mythic imperative, producing a growing dislocation between wishful thinking and brute facts, between rhetoric and the objective truth which inevitably leads to disaster.

There is one other point worth highlighting as part of this brief publicity spot. The stress on palingenetic ultranationalism as the matrix of fascism's dynamics corroborates the assumptions being applied, mostly tacitly, by a growing number of foreign historians especially in the USA²⁶ who in the last few years have published excitingly innovative work on the topic of Fascist culture, once widely seen as a contradiction in terms. Moreover, it is profoundly compatible with, and extensively corroborated by, the meticulous research into the ideology of Fascism and neo-

Fascism undertaken in the last decade by such indigenous scholars as Pier-Giorgio Zunino, Emilio Gentile, Marco Revelli and Franco Ferraresi. Hence, rather than being seen as an exercise in artificial insemination (or ‘genetic modification’), perhaps publishing initiatives such as the series *Fascismo/fascismi* are simply following the time-honoured gardening principle of grafting some healthy shoots onto existing plants (an organic, revitalizing metaphor, but insufficiently totalizing and palingenetic to appeal to fascists!).

Whatever form the process takes, if the new consensus can be assimilated ‘naturally’ into the conventional thinking of Italian academics it promises to impart a new momentum into home-grown research into Fascism, one which will do justice to the depth and complexity of its ideological dynamics without revisionist intent. In particular, it may enable Italians finally to locate Fascism not just within the national context of an incomplete *Risorgimento* or a temporary crisis of the liberal state, but within the wider context of the generalized and protracted crisis in European culture, or rather in the Enlightenment humanist vision of the health and progress of Western civilization, whose symptoms proliferated towards the end of the nineteenth century. It was this crisis which, as my latest research will eventually hope to explain,²⁷ gave birth to such apparently unrelated phenomena as the revolt against positivism, the occult revival, modernism, and the wave of popular war-fever which broke out in all combatant countries at the beginning of the First World War, and which in Italy played such a crucial role in the genesis of Fascism. All of them partake of the profound ambivalence encapsulated in the Chinese ideogram for ‘crisis’ which means ‘danger-opportunity’, or in Nietzsche’s sense of a world ‘perpetually creating and destroying itself’.

In an age of globalization it would be ironic if an event with such profound international origins and repercussions as Fascism continued to be analysed as a strictly domestic affair. In any case, why should dirty linen only be washed at home with traditional detergents when there are so many new products and hi-tech laundrettes which can help bring out the original colours more brightly than ever?

Endnotes

1. An obvious exception are Italy's many post-war Marxist academics, who have showed an unquestioning solidarity with their non-Italian comrades in assuming that Fascism was part of an international wave of capitalist reaction. As for non-Italian historians of Fascism who are known in Italy, the most famous Denis Mack Smith, denies that either Mussolini or his movement had a ideological dimension, thus reducing 'generic fascism' to a figment of the social scientific imagination. Significantly, one of the most important fora for debate about foreign theories of generic fascism which managed to emerge before the series 'Fascismo/fascismo' in which this volume appears was provided not by academics, but by the protagonists of a new, ideologically cohesive and sophisticated 'right wing culture', notably *Diorama letterario*. See, for example, no. 31, May-June 1985 dedicated to theories of fascism.
2. The German academic industry has also operated a 'closed shop' when it comes to the analysis of the Third Reich (with the honourable exception of Ian Kershaw). This has led to a situation where generally only Marxists are prepared to designate Nazism a form of generic fascism: Wolfgang Wippermann's solitary attempt to popularize the term from a non-Marxist point of view in the last chapter 'Plea for a multicausal fascist theory' in his *Faschismustheorien* (Primusverlag, Darmstadt, 1997) has fallen on deaf ears. Italian readers of German may be interested in the issue of *Ethik und Sozialwissenschaften* Vol. 2, Summer 2000 dedicated to a host of responses by German and foreign academics (including myself) to Wippermann's call for a non-Marxist use of the term 'fascism' in analyses of the Third Reich.
3. See the 'Nota del curatore' in Roger Eatwell, *Fascismo. Verso un modello generale* (Antonio Pellicani Editore, 1999), pp. 15-17. Please note that the Italian translation of this chapter will respect the convention now well-established in English of using upper case Fascism/Fascist for the Italian movement and regime and the lower case fascism/fascist for the generic phenomenon.
4. It is regrettable that Renzo de Felice and G. L. Mosse were lost to the academic world before they could contribute to this volume, and that several other major academics, Ernst Nolte, Eugen Weber, Neil O'Sullivan, and Zeev Sternhell did not take up the opportunity to write a chapter. In the Italian context the absence of Zeev Sternhell from the chorus of voices is particularly unfortunate, since his theory of fascism is particularly well known to right wing circles in Italy, and he is a major pioneer of the 'new consensus' referred to in this chapter, despite his idiosyncratic exclusion of Nazism from the family of generic fascism (on account of its 'biological racism').
5. E.g. the neo-Trotskyite analysis of David Renton, *Fascism* (Pluto Press, London, 1999).
6. E.g. R. J. Golsan (ed.) *The Return of Fascism*, (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1998); R. J. Golsan, (ed.) *Fascism Aesthetics and Culture*, (University Press of New England, Hanover and London, 1998); Andrew Hewitt: *Fascist Modernism: The Aestheticization of Politics* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1992).

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7. A notable example is *Fascism. Past, Present, Future* (OUP, New York, 1996) by Walter Laqueur another doyen of fascist studies, which swims courageously against the current by presenting Islamic fundamentalism as a permutation of fascism within the category 'clerical fascism', a considerable departure from its original usage in the context of Fascist Italy.

 8. For an account of the emergence of the consensus see the General Introduction to R. Griffin, *International Fascism* (Arnold, London, 1998). The latest convert to the paradigm, no matter how unwitting or reluctant, is A. James Gregor, also a contributor to this volume. His latest book on generic fascism, *Phoenix* (Transaction, New Brunswick, 1999), makes liberal use of expressions such as 'regeneration', 'redemption', 'renewal', 'renovation', 'new man' to explain the ultimate goal of fascist ideology, and contains such statements such as 'fascism...is a tortured, enraged, and passionate demand for national renewal' (p. 162), thus pointing to a radical departure from his central preoccupation with fascism as a form of 'developmental dictatorship'. It is thus ironic with hindsight that in his introduction to the Italian edition of his classic *Theories of Fascism (Il fascismo. Interpretazioni e giudizi*, Antonio Pellicani, Rome, 1997) he attacks my variant of the consensus in no uncertain terms, especially since at one point (p. 54, fn. 66) he approvingly cites contemporary D. Grandi's characterization of Fascism as 'nazionalismo palingenetico'.

 9. It should be stressed that the ground for the 'new consensus' which emerged in the 1990s (and which is far from being a 'school of thought') was thoroughly prepared by a handful of particularly influential attempts to formulate a general theory of fascism published over the previous fifteen years by a number of scholars, notably Eugen Weber, Zeev Sternhell, G. L. Mosse, and three contributors to the present volume, Juan J. Linz, A. James Gregor, and, above all, Stanley Payne. Secondly, it is a consensus which so far exists principally in the Anglophone social sciences, and even within these its hegemony is, as in academic debates over any generic concepts, not only far from complete but destined to remain so.

 10. A paradox of the debate over fascism is that some of the most famous theorists or historians of fascism have produced models which have been almost completely ignored as heuristic devices by scholars working in the field, and hence made little or no practical contribution to producing a consensus within fascist studies on the basic conceptual framework to be used: this is true of Ernst Nolte, Eugen Weber, Walter Laqueur, Henry A. Turner, A. James Gregor, Zeev Sternhell, and Renzo de Felice.

 11. *Fascism* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995).

 12. *International Fascism. Theories, Causes and the New Consensus* (Arnold, London, 1998)

 13. 'Staging the Nation's Rebirth' in G. Berghaus (ed.) *Fascism and Theatre* (Berghahn, Oxford, 1996)

 14. R. Griffin, 'fascism', *The Encyclopaedia of Politics and Religion* (Routledge, New York, 1998)

 15. R. Griffin, 'fascism', *Encarta 2000 Encyclopaedia* (Microsoft Publications CD ROM

encyclopaedia)

16. 'The Sacred Synthesis: The Ideological Cohesion of Fascist Culture', *Modern Italy* (1998), Vol. 3, No. 1, 5-23.
17. 'Romantic Twilight or Post-modernist Dawn?', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1995
18. 'Party Time: Nazism as a Temporal Revolution', *History Today* Vol. 49(4) (April 1999)
19. 'GUD Reactions: the patterns of prejudice of a neo-fascist *groupuscule*', *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 33, no. 2 (April 1999)
20. 'The Post-fascism of the Alleanza nazionale: A case-study in Ideological Morphology', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1996.
21. 'Between metapolitics and *apoliteia*: the New Right's strategy for conserving the fascist vision in the 'interregnum'', *Contemporary French Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (February 2000).
22. Pinter, London 1991; Routledge, London, 1993.
23. Applying my ideal type of fascism, the 'Conservative Revolution', which has had such an impact on the European New Right, is a permutation of fascism rather than conservatism: see Griffin, *Fascism*, op.cit., pp. 351-7; also Griffin, 'Between metapolitics and *apoliteia*' op.cit.
24. For detailed empirical confirmation of this validity approach, see particularly Emilio Gentile, *Il mito dello stato nuovo*, (Laterza, Bari, 1982).
25. Emilio Gentile, *Il culto del littorio* (Laterza, Rome, 1993)
26. For a sample of this work see the special issues of *Stanford Italian Review* (8, 1-2, 1990), dedicated 'Fascism and Culture'; and of *Journal of Contemporary History* (31, 2, 1996) devoted to 'The Aesthetics of Fascism'. Particularly productive in this area is a new generation of scholars such as Jeffrey Schnapp, Mabel Berezin, Emily Braun, and Ruth Ghat, who empirically demonstrate the need to take seriously Fascism's efforts to institute a cultural revolution, no matter how inconsistent in theory and unsuccessful in outcome.
27. *Rebirthing the West. Modernity and the Fascist Cultural Renaissance* (Macmillan, London): work in progress.