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The Nature Of Fascism



Synopsis

The Nature of Fascism draws on the history of ideas as well as on political, social and psychological theory to produce a synthesis of ideas and approaches that will be invaluable for students. Roger Griffin locates the driving force of fascism in a distinctive form of utopian myth, that of the regenerated national community, destined to rise up from the ashes of a decadent society. He lays bare the structural affinity that relates fascism not only to Nazism, but to the many failed fascist movements that surfaced in inter-war Europe and elsewhere, and traces the unabated proliferation of virulent (but thus far successfully marginalized) fascist activism since 1945.

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Customer Reviews

This is an excellent book. Ambitious in scope, though the author is commendably modest in his pretensions, it sets out to provide a new definition of fascism as a generic term. . . . the arguments are invariably stimulating, the insights perceptive. Griffin has an enviable grasp of the literature and discusses all the major issues of fascist historiography in the light of his own theory. Last but not least, he writes with admirable lucidity and lightness of touch. His book succeeds in its aim of being of use to the specialist and student/general reader alike.

What do we mean by 'fascist'? 'The most broad-ranging internally consistent and suggestive general book on the subject that has so far been published.' -Richard Thurlow Department of History, University of Sheffield

Excellent straight-forward academic attempt to give a minimum definition of generic fascism - the shared essentials of Italy and those cases which followed. Written by an historian of ideas, the work starts with the ideology of fascism in its positive aspects rather than the historical and socio-political particularities of its origin or its characteristics as a movement or a regime. Essential to its ideology, Griffin says, is a palingenetic (look it up) myth of rebirth or renewal, from a time of decay, achieved by a movement of populist ultra-nationalism. Two good introductory chapters on the semantic muddle of the word "fascism" today and on the basic method of using social-scientific concepts to study history.

The Nature of Fascism by Roger Griffin provides a unique contribution to the field of fascist studies. Griffin attempts to provide a definition for the essence of a series of movements and political regimes which were given rise to in the earlier part of this last century and which he believes constitute "fascism". The term fascism has fallen into much abuse and misuse in modern times, and it has become a part of our common linguistic currency used to define or demolish any movement which appears to have totalitarian or authoritarian underpinnings or which is overly oppressive. For instance, Marxist historians are especially prone to label as fascist any movement which is contrary to their own particular political ideology of history as class struggle. (This is particularly ironic because Marxism itself appears to be an extremely violent and oppressive ideology, not all that dissimilar from the ideologies of Mussolini or Hitler, in a word - fascist.) Griffin contends that there is such a thing as "generic fascism" of which the National Socialism of Hitler's Germany (Nazism) and the Fascism of Mussolini's Italy are two particular instances of. Griffin defines this generic fascism as: "Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism. (p. 26)". Thus, fascism is a utopian revolutionary ideology which attempts to revive a form of ultra-nationalism - represented frequently by the myth of the phoenix, the mythical bird which arises new each day from its own ashes. Griffin argues against Eric Voegelin's thesis that fascism (particularly National Socialism) is a form of political religion, a revival of the Gnostic heresy with roots in the apocalyptic tradition represented by the medieval monastic Joachim of Fiore. (Here, I disagree slightly with Griffin's somewhat overly simplistic rejection of Voegelin. Voegelin is famous for saying that one must avoid the "immanentization of the eschaton", the attempt to create the Kingdom of God on Earth.) Once Griffin has succeeded in defining generic fascism to his satisfaction, he then goes on to explore the various political movements and regimes which are instances of it or which bear a resemblance to

his definition but which fail to fulfill all of its requirements. First, Griffin discusses Italian Fascism, beginning with the proto-fascism (not fully fascist) in Italy before the rise of Benito Mussolini. The Italian proto-fascism arose out of various movements of Italian interventionists who combined with certain aspects of neo-syndicalism (whose principal expositor is that of Georges Sorel). Individuals such as D'Annunzio, Papini, and the Futurist movement in the arts led by Marinetti, combined under Mussolini to form the fascist movement in Italy. Griffin then discusses various aspects of Italian Fascism once it had come to full development in a totalitarian dictatorship under Mussolini, and also examines the various forms of postwar fascism in Italy. Next, Griffin turns his attention towards German Fascism (represented by National Socialism). In Germany, various forms of proto-fascism existed which finally completed itself in the fully fascist Third Reich regime under Adolf Hitler. Conservative revolutionaries, reactionary modernists, Volkish ideologues, and various proto-Nazi occultists were combined into a movement that gave rise to German National Socialism (Nazism). Griffin discusses the development of Nazism under Hitler and its completion in the demise of the Third Reich and the subsequent death of Hitler. Next, Griffin examines what he terms "abortive inter-war fascisms". These are various attempts to create a fascist movement in European nations (particularly those occupied by the Nazis). Griffin contends that fascist forces were always marginalized before they had the chance to come to full power. These movements include various "para-fascisms" (attempts to create a movement with the external trappings of fascism) among which are Vichy France and Franco's Spain (which was strongly reactionary but not truly and fully fascist). Finally, Griffin turns to non-European and postwar fascisms. These include regimes in South Africa (based on racialism) and Japan, which Griffin contends failed to become truly fascist. Griffin also examines mimetic forms of fascism (including NeoNazism) and various movements which are to be considered ultra-Right or conservative revolutionary. The book concludes with discussions on the psycho-historical bases of fascism (including examinations of myth and focusing on the theories of Arthur Koestler) and the socio-political determinants of fascism's success (which attempts to show why modern fascist movements have failed and been increasingly marginalized). I believe Griffin goes too far in labeling certain "New Right" intellectuals such as Alain de Benoist or Julius Evola with the fascist label. This label has been conveniently used by liberals to discredit different right wing thinkers who call for a "return to tradition" and a "renewal of the West". Also, I believe the most dangerous form of fascism in the modern world comes not from nationalist groups but from the global democratic elite themselves. In an era in which global hegemony is being concentrated into the hands of an ever decreasing in size select group of globalist profiteering elite, it is apparent that a new form of "fascism" is arriving upon us in the form of a New World Order. By

itself, palingenetic movements are not necessarily to be avoided. It may be that a certain type of palingenetic movement is the only one possible to assure our survival of the viscidities of modernity.

The Palingenic Myth Thesis. Griffin knows his work, and this book presents a great scholarly labor; however, the palingenetic myth thesis subverts what the . . . ideologically neutral? theory of State fascism *is* in-itself --a palliative to invasive social forces and forms, a defensive measure vis-a-vis one designed to project force. It takes control of a government and orchestrates by dictate administrative-bureaucratic oligarchies the modern state provides, to the end of being the puppet master of a society deemed to be incapable of surviving apart from it, and with it its direction organizing it into an 'organic unity' such that can withstand an entropic social and moral state in which a society's laws and customs merely serve to goad its slide into historical non-existence with ever growing anarchy ect. ect."It may be that a certain type of palingenetic movement is the only one possible to assure our survival of the viscidities of modernity." -Great statement by another reviewer; and in fact, ANY coherent social identity of ANY kind present THE sole threat to white liberal progressives of New Left and NeoConservative right; something to which end libertarians are so often caricatured as being 'reactionary closet fascists' ect. These archetypes are most succinctly apparent in the television program "Family Guy", where those schizoidal regime/establishment conceptions occur to obsessive degrees. That is to say -Griffin's thesis is the praxis of another tyranny and fascist monopoly on the functions of state, of an invidious imperialism of a sort lower than the open and honest aggressive chauvinism of old-style and patriotic nationalist regimes from the last century. I leave them and this transparent evil unnamed, but as Winston Churchill once truly stated "The next fascists will be the anti-fascists." God knows the regime is full of *them*, of *IT*. -Amen. May the next crop of patriots continue their worthy efforts unperturbed by the pharisee and philistine alike.

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