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# Elements for a critical reelaboration of the concept of fascism

Elementos para uma reelaboração crítica do conceito de fascismo

Elementos para una reelaboración crítica del concepto de fascismo

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## Abstract

The text aims to carry out a critical analysis of the concept of fascism and its implications for contemporary politics. The proposal is divided into three sections: the first, raises a critique of the interpretation of the so-called «catatonic fascism», in which a rejection of the re-emergence of contemporary fascism that returns to the political arena after being annihilated at the end of World War II is raised. The second section distinguishes fascism in its 'exoteric' and «esoteric» «forms». This distinction has to do with the understanding of the relationship between fascism and capitalism. Although these positions are to some extent complementary, the text tries to stress them, as well as to show the limits of the «exoteric» reading and the possibilities opened by the «esoteric» interpretation. The work concludes with some notes

that serve to problematize the reworking of the concept of fascism in a critical exercise that seeks to add to the confrontation of one of the most terrible forms of domination of modernity.

**Descriptors:** Fascism; Capitalism; Marxism; Critical Theory.

### **Resumo**

O texto visa realizar uma análise crítica do conceito de fascismo e suas implicações para a política contemporânea. A proposta é dividida em três seções: a primeira é uma crítica à interpretação do chamado «fascismo catatônico», na qual é proposta a rejeição do ressurgimento do fascismo contemporâneo que retorna à arena política após ser aniquilado no final da Segunda Guerra Mundial. A segunda seção distingue o fascismo em suas formas «exotéricas» e «esotéricas». Esta distinção tem a ver com a compreensão da relação entre fascismo e capitalismo. Embora estas posições sejam em certa medida complementares, o texto tenta colocá-las em tensão, assim como mostrar os limites da leitura «exotérica» e as possibilidades abertas pela interpretação «esotérica». O trabalho termina com algumas notas que servem para problematizar a reformulação do conceito de fascismo em um exercício crítico que procura acrescentar ao confronto de uma das mais terríveis formas de dominação da modernidade.

**Descriptores:** Fascismo; Capitalismo; Marxismo; Teoría Crítica.

### **Resumen**

El texto pretende realizar un análisis crítico alrededor del concepto de fascismo y sus implicaciones para la política contemporánea. La propuesta se divide en tres apartados: el primero, plantea una crítica a la interpretación del aquí denominado «fascismo catatónico», en la que se plantea un rechazo a la reemergencia del fascismo contemporáneo que vuelve al terreno político tras ser aniquilado al finalizar la Segunda Guerra Mundial. El segundo apartado, distingue al fascismo en su forma «exotérica» y «esotérica». Esta distinción, tiene que ver con la comprensión de la relación existente entre fascismo y capitalismo. Aunque estas posiciones son hasta cierto punto complementarias, el texto intenta tensionarlas, así como muestra los límites de la lectura «exotérica» y las posibilidades que abre la interpretación «esotérica». El trabajo concluye con algunos apuntes que sirven para problematizar la reelaboración del concepto de fascismo en un ejercicio crítico que busca sumar al enfrentamiento de una de las formas de dominación más terribles de la modernidad.

**Descritores:** Fascismo; Capitalismo; Marxismo; Teoría da Crítica.

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## Introduction

### Against catatonic fascism

At the end of the so-called Second World War, the Allies declared fascism without a vital pulse and celebrated in the rubble the triumph of democracy demanded by both **socialists** and **capitalists**. They instructed their media to publish the time of death and place it, as a museum piece, in the room where the victories of civilization are exhibited. At the dawn of history, the victims were also buried in a past that was assumed to be increasingly distant and dissected with absolute precision, concluding that it was nothing more than a regrettable accident in the flow of modernity that had already been reported done justice. However, in the late 20th century, the century of catastrophe, as Hobsbawm calls it,<sup>1</sup> a repressive force was imposed in many places around the world. The Latin American dictatorships, Vietnam, Pol Pot, Mexico 1968 and a long list of others, added with greater or lesser intensity to the parallels with those years of fascist rule in Europe. For political commentators, this meant that fascism perhaps kept an open eye that reflected the dynamics of authoritarianism and barbarism.

In the discourse of the United States and its accomplices, the disintegration of the Soviet Union crystallized the triumph of representative democracy, which meant the re-emergence of any authoritarian regime in the world was impossible. The chain of meanings that American triumphalism carried was also linked to the "fading" of the national State in favor of an increasingly deep interdependence that put renewed spirits in globalization in the neoliberal phase. In such a way that nationalist support, assumed as a pillar of the fascist form, no longer seemed a contemporary concern.

Such a perspective did not last long. On the one hand, he faced brutal criticism that shook his foundations, as demonstrated by the Zapatista emergency whose radicality in the face of the false dignity of multiculturalism drawn from the centers of power questioned everything. So did the Battle of Seattle and its challenge against the architecture that wove the world market. On the other hand, a conservative response reflected the rejection of globalization through processes such as those that accompanied the dissolution of Yugoslavia or the popular national matrix that Latin American progressivism adopted at the beginning of the 21st century. The survival of nationalism, strengthened by its opposition to globalization, already showed that the possibility of palingenetic ultranationalism<sup>2</sup> being renewed as a social force remained open.

A few years later, in 2008, the accentuated crisis of capitalism once again put on the table the possibility of collapsing the social world as we know it. The power of the demands, with a strong echo because they were expressed from

the global north, illuminated the buildings of New York, London, Rome, Madrid, etc. *Occupy* gave lessons in a prefigurative politics<sup>3</sup> that showed, at least for moments, that the collapse of capital did not seem so far away, although it exchanged its emancipatory possibility with the abandonment of the revolution for democracy.<sup>4</sup> However, at the same time that the strength of these movements was fighting between institutionalized cooptation and the possibility of a different world, a much darker figure germinated in the *subprime crisis and other sectors equally hit by the financial disaster*. Perhaps November 8, 2016 can be seen as the most media moment of the path taken by popular anger with the election of Donald J. Trump in the United States. If before that moment there had been signs from the most privileged centers of knowledge production and dissemination of a **neo-fascist, right-wing populist**, etc. emergency, launched with exaggerated restraint, after the Trump phenomenon it seemed that all the front pages accepted the change of coordinated in the official political geometry and they announced that that fascism put on display, more than dead, had catatonic syndrome and was back on the streets.

This interpretation, quite widespread among very diverse political sectors, is appropriate if fascism is understood only on the surface, in its open and militant manifestation. Obviously, to support this criticism an argument is needed that we will break down below, although first, it is necessary to establish a brief comment on the diffusion of the concept.

Concepts are divided on a battlefield. The identification of the subject and the object in the concept has political consequences that are as important as they are dangerous, which is why its discussion is central. The concept of fascism was diffuse from the moment it was coined. Beyond the definition that Mussolini's party closed, what he tried to name climbed through different branches. The problem is that, after the military defeat of the Axis powers, it was incorporated into popular language in such a broad way that its enunciation became a double-edged political tool and an analytical burden. It has been very common for the right and the left to accuse each other of being fascist with the aim of discrediting the opponent and gaining ground. Also, many groups have managed to develop identity policies in the State based on their complaints against a fascism that oppresses them. Authoritarianism, totalitarianism, anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia and misogyny have been identified with the same term. All evils fit into fascism, but, in the end, it becomes so relative that it is not enough to explain and position itself beyond immediacy if we conceive it in this field. Is it worth talking about fascism then? Definitely. The point is to push from immediacy to depth to account for the critical content, as opposed to the positive, that such a concept has.

From the first point of view, the positive one, dominates the tradition of thinking about it from the iron cage that the global north imposed on it in its

colonial production of knowledge: a geographically and temporally delimited problem that cannot be reproduced identically because the conditions in that emerged were blocked through the institutions created precisely to contain it and they have done so successfully. From the second point of view, the negative, historical specificity is shared, but this should not be confused with exclusivity. No concept would serve to understand, in historical terms, more than the process for which it was developed. Logical possibility moves us against static: it precisely positions specificity as an argument against the ontological. Auschwitz cannot be repeated in history, but the logic of it passes again and again before our eyes.

Returning to the point of catatonic fascism, it is important to at least outline the argument for its rejection: from this point of view, it is not possible to explain the mediations that are established between the constitution of a regime or form of government and its social dispersion. If only a re-emergence of fascism is understood or is limited to proposing lines of continuity from its appearance as a form of government, they would not only make the question of fascism an aspect of "politics", but not of the "political", that of course it can be contained "in" the State, with the elements of representative democracy and its popularity contest when it tries to be transparent, but, in addition, the seemingly elementary mass movement would have an instrumental and victimizing role. It would be nothing more than an inert mass driven to barbarism based on a utilitarian motivation, between the minimization of pain and the maximization of pleasure, which aligns itself with the regime as sweetened by the promise of liberation as it is terrified by the possibility of punishment. Again, this position illuminates important relationships that must be studied, but closing the matter there would be to take for granted that the spontaneity of a force is based on much more than a current of air.

If the emergence of fascism is understood exclusively as a form of government, a research program can be proposed that addresses this dimension in a very limited way, as has been addressed by a large part of the dominant academy in disciplines such as Political Science in recent years<sup>a</sup>, for example. If, on the contrary, it is understood that the lines of continuity illuminate a latency that is actually the center and not the margin, the political consequences would displace us from the exclusive space of official institutions to the popular field.

The catatonic idea makes the substance of fascism nebulous, but descriptively it is useful to understand immediacy and build a mobilizing political strategy. Talking about return also has to do with trauma, with the denial that what caused the terror is actually between us.

**Exoteric fascism and esoteric fascism**

The interpretation of spontaneity, the catatonic, has a point of contact that can be added to another more general line in which different, and often opposing, political traditions come together. I am referring to an interpretation that I have called "exoteric fascism"<sup>b.5</sup>

Like basically any social manifestation, fascism is widely related to capitalism. Understanding the form and substance of this relationship is essential to understand its dynamics not in an isolated or fragmentary way, but rather interconnected to a series of violence and processes that require great research efforts to reveal its particular characteristics.

The truth is that the idea that there is a relationship between fascism and capital, which seems more than obvious in various critical readings, is not so obvious in other traditions that are widely disseminated. In liberal arguments, because they encompass a current that is not strictly liberal and that presents great divergences within it, the relationship between fascism and capital, at most, is presented from the corporatist description of the State and the role played by the great lords of industry in the interwar period. This view, without further explanation, ignores the depth of capitalist social relations which, of course, are not identical to the market or the accumulation of money by individuals or groups of individuals. Most likely, the work produced from this point of view has enriched knowledge about the particularities of the political systems, government practices and other institutional manifestations of historical fascist regimes. However, even when they show great spirit to combat this political force, their speech ends in a reconciliation with the mere will that embraces the existing order<sup>c.6</sup>

The relationship between fascism and capital that is presented in "liberal" readings constitutes a frankly starving example of exoteric fascism, although it is terribly important to mention it because of the political confrontation that it opens with various critical arguments. It is precisely from the latter that we can establish with much greater precision the characteristics of exoteric fascism. Specifically, it refers to the link between fascism and capitalism but only understanding the latter in its exteriority. This does not mean that fascism is seen outside of capitalism, but rather that its point of contact is the surface, what appears from capitalism, and not its substance. As Moishe Postone would put it,<sup>7</sup> would be a criticism of distribution and not production.

It is perhaps natural that this current had in its ranks several militant Marxists who lived through the rise of European fascism, since one of the basic objectives of the latter was to dismantle the proletarian organization in a battle fought in the streets. Along this path, the discussions of the Third International and its sharp debates stand out, where Thalheimer's interpretation<sup>8</sup> has been particularly famous, which established a dialogue between fascism and Bonapartism, distinguishing these forms by the reconfiguration of capital



relations, especially the imperialist dynamics of that time, the mass movement and the cultural differences in the territories in which they were manifested, to account for a phenomenon that was truly novel and, therefore, historically specific. However, it is perhaps in the voice of Clara Zetkin,<sup>9</sup> a member of the Women's International, that the criticism of one of the most important principles of the militant Marxist reading was most clearly exposed: the idea of fascism as a counterrevolution.

In his ruthless emergence against proletarian organizations, Zetkin<sup>9</sup> positioned very well the idea that fascism should be understood not as a simple counterattack by the bourgeoisie to subsume proletarian power, but rather as a punishment for its inability to extend the revolution, an issue that was not only brewing on the military level, but also on the ideological and political level, penetrating even the strongest layers of the proletariat.

This critique, although important for thinking about fascism not only as a subject, but also as an object, contains a limit that lies in contingency. There seems to be a reluctance to understand fascism on its own terms: counterrevolution or failure of the revolution is understood as a doubling of the role of the proletariat. The possibility of fascism developing as a regime probably depends on conjunctural conditions linked to class relations, but its possibility of existing is found only in what is immanent to it.

However, the experience of fascism as a counterrevolution has a lot to say about historical and contemporary political action. Perhaps, two of its most prominent followers, Gramsci<sup>10</sup> and Trotsky<sup>11</sup>, can offer us a sharper perspective on this matter. The concept of fascism in Gramsci<sup>10</sup> matured according to the situation and is extremely related to his entire theoretical corpus. In fact, it is possible to interpret his work in general as a fight against fascism.

Although above all his early writings add to the reading of the counterrevolution, in his approaches one can also observe elements that paved the way for a perspective not stagnant in strategy:

What is fascism if observed on an international scale? It is an attempt to solve production problems and financial issues with the submachine gun and revolver. The productive forces have been ruined and squandered in the imperialist war: twenty million young people in the prime of life and with their abilities intact have died, another twenty million have been left disabled; the thousands and thousands of links that connected the different world markets have been violently broken; They have changed drastically between the city

and the countryside, and between the metropolis and the colonies; Migratory flows - which periodically reestablished the balance between surplus population and the potential of a nation's productive means - have been distorted and do not flow normally. A unity and simultaneity of national crises has been created that, therefore, makes the general crisis extremely harsh and everlasting. But in all countries there is a stratum of the population - the small and medium bourgeoisie - that believes itself capable of solving these gigantic problems by machine-gunning and shooting, and this stratum feeds fascism, supplies troops to fascism.<sup>10</sup><sup>(34)</sup>

This argument, at the same time that it is supported by the image of the counterrevolution, finds its breeding ground from a life in crisis. Reflection on the latter encourages us to establish a non-mechanical link, which is certainly extremely relevant to today, but rather particularly situated in the multiple variables that go through a situation.

Also, it is very interesting to understand the emphasis that Gramsci places on the First World War not as a defeat of the proletariat in the midst of the imperialist dispute and the crisis of its colonial expansion, but as the damage to life itself caused by the brutality of a conflict that could not simply end with the Peace Treaties. The emphasis on strategy, coercion and consensus is very important to combat the manifest political terrain, but attention to a shadow that transformed life itself due to the particularity of its violence, opens a dimension in the relationship with capital that it does not fit into its economic explanation.

On the other hand, Trotsky<sup>11</sup> was also forced to fight against fascism at the moment, although the Italian experience had actually already been developing for several years at the time of his first writings on the phenomenon. In particular, Trotsky analyzes the rise of the Nazis from the point of view of the defeat of the proletariat and its inability to form a party that could confront the fascist advance, fundamentally characterized by a response of the petty bourgeoisie in the context of the disaster. financial of 1929<sup>d</sup>.

Trotsky's central question<sup>11</sup> is truly relevant today: why, at the moment when material conditions make the overcoming of capital possible, do we witness the emergence of terror and not emancipation? His response is entangled in the frustration of the proletarian organization and its inability to seize state power. The historical mission of fascism, to put an end to the last remnant of the proletariat according to Trotsky: "[...] the essence and role of fascism consists in completely liquidating all workers' organizations and preventing



any rebirth of them",<sup>11</sup> was painfully carried out, although not necessarily by the fascist regime.

The problem with focusing attention on this concept of fascism is that, if the basic reason for fascism is to annihilate the proletariat, what sense does its contemporary deployment have? If what remains of the proletariat today can only be articulated through progressivism, which does not even carry within itself fundamental elements of the proletariat, then what is needed as a counterrevolution is nothing more than a caricature, which definitely does not correspond to what we face.

Obviously, today that the proletariat no longer exists, there are other forces in society that are uncomfortable with the terrible situation that plagues us and that have enlightening power, but the argument of counterrevolution, if it is presented in reactionary terms, cannot be sustained. but through a reductionist concept of the class struggle between owners and dispossessed or in its actualization, between privileged and marginalized -Not only fascism, but fascists personified as such, become the instrument of a bourgeoisie driven by accumulation that, to solve the crisis it is going through, releases the chain of the beast. However, there is no mechanical relationship between the crisis of capital and fascism, nor a central command that pulls the strings, as has been shown time and again in the reconfigurations of capital, both in its agents and in power relations. At national and international level.

The relationship between fascism and capital for militant Marxism is a promise of guarantee on the accumulation and circulation of capital. His political analysis is truly useful in opening up the strategy of a movement with aspirations to establish itself as a regime, but his conceptualization of capitalism, which is ultimately reduced to the economic sphere without immediately nullifying its political and social implications, does not account for the depth that it can have in a society where "wealth as an enormous accumulation of merchandise" prevails and, therefore, where value strangles with its conditions.

An identity reading of fascism is extremely problematic: with all the recognition that we can have of the struggles, resistances and challenges that have posed to domination, it is necessary to insist that, both politically and analytically, approaching fascism from its positivization leads us to carrying out the same practices that it seeks to eradicate.

Promoting a non-identitarian reading of fascism is an attempt that can be traced in the name of "esoteric fascism." The starting point of this interpretation is the intrinsic relationship between fascism and capital, where the latter is not reduced to a mode of production, much less to a thing. This is not to say that the class conditions and disputes presented on the surface are

not relevant, but rather that they have to be seen only as one dimension of the problem and not as a whole. Understanding it in this last way, conditions political action to failure.

It is possible that the origin of this proposal was formulated in a historical moment somewhat parallel to that of exoteric fascism, although the experiential core<sup>f</sup> and a much more radical critical elaboration resulted in the deployment of a proposal that is very relevant for our time. Among the first studies that we can mention in this line are those carried out by the Institute for Social Research of the University of Frankfurt. For the thinkers of the first generation of the so-called Critical Theory, the emergence of the Nazis was not a surprise. In reality, the work they carried out in relation to authority, the role of the working class, the family, among others, made them take seriously the warning signs that were manifested on the path paved by the Nazis, although it is likely that simply because of their intellectual orientation and especially their racial condition, they did not have much choice other than acute and fearful attention.

When the Nazis arrived at the Institute, it had basically already gone into exile, where they continued a fight against fascism so active and contradictory that it even meant the participation of some of its most prominent members in the intelligence services of the US government under the slogan , as Pollock would say in an interview conducted by Martin Jay,<sup>12</sup> of fervent anti-Nazism<sup>g</sup>.

Some of the most important elements of esoteric fascism were preceded by an early debate between state capitalism and monopoly capitalism that arose from the work of Friedrich Pollock<sup>13</sup> and Franz Neumann<sup>h</sup>.<sup>14</sup> What was discussed was basically the clarification of the path taken by the transformation of capital in the face of the exhaustion of its liberal form, resulting in either a primacy of the political or, on the other hand, a primacy of the economic. What this means is that capitalism was controlled by political agents or that, on the contrary, monopolies were the most important entities in maintaining domination. Both proposals were very important for discussions about the State in the following decades, although the perspective that enjoyed the greatest circulation was that of Pollock, supported by Horkheimer and Adorno.<sup>15</sup> From Pollock's point of view,<sup>13</sup> what was at stake with the reconfiguration of capital was a dispute for power that was no longer fought through the possession of the means of production, but rather a kind of control management that was linked to the growth of fascist policies, although it also explained socialist state capitalism and even Roosevelt's *New Deal* .

In these interpretations, still limited by a concept of fundamentally economic capital, the clarification of one more aspect about the Nazi regime and postliberal society was added, as Marcuse pointed out:<sup>16</sup> the indissolubility of the aspiration for political power and the logic of accumulation. Interweaving

these two manifestations, which today seems quite common for the non-orthodox left, was an extremely important contribution to rethink the relationship between State and capital and, therefore, question the role of fascism only as an instrument in the class struggle.

Precisely that was one of the many questions that both Adorno and Horkheimer were in charge of working on during the course of the war and once it ended. Especially for Adorno it was important to consider the subjective elements deployed by fascism that did not fit into militancy. It was not only the dispute over resources and accumulation that manifested itself in Europe, but the very decline of the bourgeois world whose maximum expression was realized in the catastrophe called Auschwitz. Instrumental rationality, the administered world, the violence of bureaucracy and the ways in which capitalism manifests itself in daily life, sowed a terror that cannot be separated from genocide, although it is clear that for these thinkers, the power of fascism is not reduced to its concrete expression, but must be thought about the conditions opened by capitalist rationality that makes the deployment of fascism possible.

In "Elements of Antisemitism", Horkheimer and Adorno<sup>15</sup> present the double dimension of capitalist social relations as production and circulation and the effects they had on the deployment of bourgeois antisemitism. At the level of production, the "concrete" side of capitalism, workers experienced (obviously they still do), in addition to the terrible working conditions, the violence of wages as a representation of the separation from their creation. However, this misery was not enough for them to come out in hordes rebelling in the streets. On the contrary, the hidden control of the merchandise disposed the person in charge of circulation, the merchant, as the incarnation of a total evil: "the merchant shows the letter that they have signed to the industrialist. He acts as bailiff of the entire system and attracts to himself the hatred that should fall on the others."<sup>15</sup> (219)

The criticism that Adorno continued to develop throughout his life was very important to understand the objective dimension of capitalism and its relationship with fascism. In "What does it mean to rework the past?"<sup>17</sup> establishes that "the dominant ideology today is defined by the fact that people, the more they depend on objective constellations that they do not control or do not believe they control, the more they subjectify this powerlessness",<sup>17</sup>(§ 8) The argument resonates in its expression of fascism as a mixture of "King Kong and the neighborhood hairdresser": in a society characterized by the submission of the individual in the face of impersonal domination that decomposes life, the relevance to the group is embraced as the elemental omnipotence of identification as a collective force (the substitution of a superego for the group ego, indicates Adorno). That is, it is the submission of the individual to the saving whole and therefore the feeling

of loss of the individual himself, which of course is not limited to the bourgeois category, but to his very existence repressed by the violence of the totality. Capitalist social relations cannot be exhausted in immediacy, in distribution and circulation, but rather have an effect that crosses existence itself where fascism becomes a latency pregnant with value.

### **Notes for the development of a critical concept of fascism**

Exoteric fascism, with its counterrevolutionary emphasis, has been widely accepted by an important sector of the contemporary left. His body has been adjectived and filled with prefixes to account for a particularity that bears parallels with the fascism born in the interwar period. In his perspective, an opposition is brewing between fascism and democracy that can only be true if it is thought from the point of view of totalitarianism and fascism equated to dictatorship. Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 - DiEM25 in the north or the Puebla Group in Latin America, for example, have established a progressive mobilization, from democracy, to block the insertion of fascists in the State. The task may be genuine, but its concept is unable to contain fascism within its own forces.

On the other hand, fascism from an esoteric perspective does not lose sight of Adorno's famous comment about the major danger posed by its survival in democracy, rather than the tendency against it. Its social form cannot be reduced to its political agenda, but must be interpreted/combated as the intrinsic relationship it maintains with capital, which includes civilized modernity.

Much has been said about violence as a nuclear element of fascism, a genocidal power that has already been realized in history, but if its nature is intertwined with the violence of capital, it cannot simply be a construction of the enemy in Carl Schmitt's terms,<sup>18</sup> but of the generation of borders that is already contained in the identity of the deployment of capital. Precisely, the particularity of violence in capital is not only the world of working conditions or the injustice of the distribution of wealth, but the constitution of socially abstract labor as a substance of value, as an absolute mediation of social relations.

The relationship of fascism with capital does not consist of unmasked violence to guarantee the unequal distribution of the fruits of labor, but in its fetishized fight against abstract domination, finally against value. Moishe Postone<sup>19</sup> illustrated this argument very well in 'The Logic of Anti-Semitism', although the interpretation of it would have to be transferred to the characteristics exhibited by fascism in general. Also, added to Postone's argument,<sup>19</sup> it is vital not to consider that socially abstract work is a real opposition to concrete work. The expressions of the concrete, the dimension

of use value in the commodity, are also part of the fascist mobilization, as is widely reflected in the discourse of the roots that is repeated over and over again, and is definitely mediated by the dynamics of the capital.

Equally popular has been the description of fascism based on its racism, xenophobia, misogyny and other terribly repressive forms. But the difference between the former and the latter is not necessarily quantitative, it is not that fascism is more explicitly racist than other social relations, or that its core lies in the sum of all these types of violence. Rather the difference is qualitative in nature. The type of racism, for example, present in fascism is particularly modern. This means that it does not take racial differentiation as a principle as an instrument to achieve an objective, but rather sets it as a threat, as an end. The genocide perpetrated by the colonizers in America was deeply racist, but to the extent that the **lower** body of the victims was the device for commercial production and accumulation, not as an **irrational** threat to existence. The aggressiveness against women contained in fascism, which when expressed in militant terms is closely linked to evangelical groups and other religious movements, is not the same as that present in the patriarchal forms of pre-capitalist societies, but is based on a movement against the threat to life, as exemplified by the desperation to control the body and reproduction.

The qualitative difference that fascism presents can be understood as a dispute against the abstract domination generated by capital. Obviously, we have representatives or agents favored in the capitalist machinery in the world, but the objectivity of capital, that movement that depends on the subject but seems to operate detached from it, goes beyond its personal manifestations. The threat that capitalism represents against life is fetishized doubly, as abstract and as concrete: abstract insofar as objectivity is embodied in groups that meet the criteria of ghostly representation (Jews and money, migrants and gypsies as their lack of nationality, etc.); concrete because there is an essence of the social that can well be expressed in the discourse of the roots, of the concrete community that encourages the overcoming of fear and pain and that is definitely mediated by the dynamics of capitalism:

German criticism, for which Kantian formalism was too rationalist, showed its bloody color in fascist praxis, which made it depend on blind appearance, on belonging or not to a certain race, which had to be killed. The apparent character of such concreteness, the fact that people were subsumed under abstract concepts with complete abstraction and treated accordingly, does not erase the stain that has since stained the word "concrete." But this does not invalidate the criticism of abstract morality. Neither this nor the ethics of supposedly "material" value, loaded with ephemeral and

eternal norms, are sufficient in the face of the constant irreconcilability of the particular and the universal.<sup>20</sup> (221)

Fascism, understood from this point of view, cannot be considered exclusively as a form of government or a political movement, but as an impersonal and adaptive social practice. But this concept is not intended to be positive: at first glance perhaps its proposal generates anxiety, a suffocating feeling because it seems that its opposition has no place, that rather we can only assume the diagnosis. In reality, it aims to be quite the opposite, it intends to assume a non-identical position, although for the same reason it cannot offer a specific program or an exclusive strategy. Even so, it should serve, in political terms, as a reaffirmation that anti-fascist practice, which does much to improve living conditions in the immediate future, reiterates one hundred times that the central problem continues to be the existence of capitalism.

### **Note of appreciation**

I greatly appreciate the comments on this text made in the "State and Capital" course taught by John Holloway during the Spring of 2022 at the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla - BUAP.

<sup>a</sup> The project is even more limited when it is considered that only some parallels can be established with the interwar period, because there is still no manifestation that resembles in degree what happened in the 1930s in Europe.

<sup>b</sup> This denomination of exoteric and esoteric fascism is inspired by Robert Kurz's work on Marx and follows his lead for an analytical classification in critical terms.

<sup>c</sup> These thinkers should be reminded of Horkheimer's powerful statement: "whoever does not want to talk about capitalism should also remain silent about fascism."

<sup>d</sup> As we can notice, in the positions of "militant Marxism", to name it in some way, the line that exists between counterrevolution and incapacity of the proletariat is blurred, although the interpretation leads us to two different ways of approaching the phenomenon.

<sup>e</sup> Faced with the fading of sociological class categories, an opposition between "those above" and "those below", for example, has emerged in many of the discourses of the left, including radical spaces.

<sup>f</sup> It is very important to mention that the contributors to the exoteric interpretation were also part of a brutal experience: we must not forget that Gramsci and Trotsky were two of the many victims of the social order. Their political interests significantly influenced the analyzes they carried out, but their theoretical interpretation was also crucial. This comment has to be



considered a reminder of how costly their position was, and therefore deserve all possible recognition, but at the same time it is also a defense of the importance of the theory and what it should mean in our time.

<sup>g</sup> In fact, this was the only requirement that those who were supported by the Institute in exile had to meet, who were fundamentally students and not renowned figures.

<sup>h</sup> Among the most notable texts of this debate is "State Capitalism. Its Possibilities and Limitations" by Pollock and Neumann's "Behemoth."

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