

What is Anti-Fascist Philosophy?

Kolleg Friedrich Nietzsche | Weimar | Germany

May 8th - 10th, 2025

For a great number of reasons, Weimar is the most plausible place for discussing the contemporary philosophical relevance of fascism. Not only is Weimar the metonymy of the first failed attempt of a democratic Germany republic, it is also the *locus classicus* for the (post-) enlightenment German classic tradition. At the same time, and because of all this, the city's proximity to the Nazi concentration camp of Buchenwald emphatically poses the question how one of the most advanced societies of the 1920s (given standards of industrial progress, the general level of culture and education, basic democratic institutions, the high level of working-class organization, and humanist traditions in intellectual history) could revert into the most brutal form of barbarism.

Philosophy has tried to draw conclusions, and, in more than just one case, turned anti-fascist. Anti-fascist philosophy, however, is not just any philosophy that in some superficial way opposes fascism. Anti-fascist philosophy is characterized by the attempt to base the very conceptual structure of philosophy itself on the opposition to the historical experience and returning threats of fascism. This starts, perhaps, with the recognition that the very act of philosophizing systematically, itself, is contingent upon hierarchy and a division of labor. The (anti-)systematic efforts of Frankfurt School Critical Theory addresses this in its early reaction to new forms of irrationalism and authoritarianism as much as in its criticism of the failure of classical enlightenment rationality.

After the liberation from national socialism, Adorno's philosophy, in particular, has been characterized as a post-Auschwitz philosophy. Much of this philosophical anti-fascism is expressed in its harsh criticism of enlightened rigorism, which would violently subsume difference (the "non-identical") and in the process accentuating the importance of „mimetic“ or „somatic“ sources of empathy with the other. Other philosophies of the post-war years were fundamentally rooted in the experience and heroic practice of the anti-fascist resistance (such as Sartre's existentialism) and systematically inspired by it. The concept of anti-fascism, however, goes back to the early 1920s and has its roots specifically in Italy. In coordinating the intellectual efforts of international anti-fascists, much of anti-fascist philosophy culminated around the strategies of the ComIntern. From the strategy of the "people's front", many philosophical positions are derived (including aesthetic theories of aesthetic realism) which circulate around the world.

Today, anti-fascism is probably no longer a common reference for philosophy — while feminism, anti-racism, de-coloniality, anti-anti-semitism, and various other forms of anti-discriminatory perspectives are powerful and influential, articulating far-reaching claims to the conceptual and systematic structure of philosophy. How do such contemporary discussions relate to the classical scope of anti-fascism? What do they make of the historical determinations of fascism (its imperialism, its destruction of the labor movement, its ethno-nationalism etc., its putative anti-capitalism and critique of abstraction, its aggressive conception of masculinity, its aesthetics of enmity, war, and violence, and fetishization of technology)?

How do they relate to the systematic tensions between universal reason and affect that had been so characteristic for the historical role model of anti-fascist philosophy, the Frankfurt school? How do they treat the crucial question of identity and non-identity-thinking?

Finally, to what extent do contemporary positions represent a break with fascism? What political vision do contemporary anti-discriminatory positions articulate in the face of very real and deeply worrisome threats to existing social orders? The conference has a twofold ambition:

It brings together international scholars working in the field of anti-fascist philosophy to intensify the dialogue on the plausibility of such traditions. At the same time, it wants to bring contemporary anti-fascist perspectives into much-needed public debate.

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Conference Program

Thursday, May 8th

- 16:00-17:30 Get together and guided tour: *Nietzsche and Weimar*
Nietzsche-Archiv | Humboldtstr. 36 | 99423 Weimar
- 18:30-20:00 Musical Reading: *Gefangene der eigenen Erinnerung*
Museum Zwangsarbeit | Jorge-Semprún-Platz 2 | 99423 Weimar
www.museum-zwangsarbeit.de/en/besuch/veranstaltungen/tanzlesung-ute-delimat

Friday, May 9th

- 9:00-10:00 Helmut Heit (Weimar): *Ressentiment. Nietzsche as Analyst of the Fascist Mindset*
- 10:15-11:15 Roberto Nigro (Lüneburg): *From Left to Right: Shifts in Political Hegemony Against the Backdrop of Structural Transformations of Capitalism and Class Composition*
- 11:30-12:30 Ellettra Stimilli (Roma): *The Intersectionality of (Anti-)Fascism*
- 14:00-15:00 Rogelio Regalado-Mujica (Puebla): *Models of Esoteric Fascism*
- 15:15-16:15: Samir Gandesha (Vancouver): *The Boys Are Back in Town: Fascist Subjectivity and the New Jargon of Authenticity*
- 16:30-17:30 Vladimir Safatle (São Paulo): *Fascism and the Generalization of Global Civil War: Thinking from the Periphery of Capitalism*
- 17:45-18:30 Wrap-Up First Day of Conference, Publication Strategy

Saturday, May 10th

- 9:00-10:00 Franziska Wildt (Frankfurt/Main): *Counter-Investigation As Antifascist Critique*
- 10:15-11:15 Johan Hartle (Wien): *The Popular Front as Philosophical Condition: Reconsidering Anti-Fascist Strategy*
- 11.30 - 12.30 Wrap-Up Second Day of Conference.

Conference venue: Residenzschloss Weimar | Kaminzimmer
Burgplatz 4 | 99425 Weimar

The workshop is open, but please register: helmut.heit@klassik-stiftung.de