

A Moment in the Ongoing Decay of the Social Contract

by Theodore Dalrymple



PARIS—In the heyday of Stalinist philosophising, one of the three so-called laws of dialectical materialism was that of the interpenetration of opposites.

According to this “law,” there is never a perfectly sharp division between opposites, but rather internal connections between them as they ‘struggle’ with one another until some new stage or state of overcoming is reached, when the whole process begins again. Like the life of a twenty-four-hour city, the dialectic never ceases.

Certainly, opposites can come to resemble one another, for example racism and antiracism. Both look at the world through the prism of race; both are powerful stimulants to hatred; both attribute characteristics not to individuals but to groups, in this case racial groups; both seek to impose their vision on the world, if necessary by force.

Usually (according to the doctrine) one of the sides, or poles, of a contradiction is stronger than the other: at present, the tide of anti-racism is riding much higher than that of racism.

Indeed, one of the poles of the alleged contradiction can almost cease to exist while its opposite survives or even thrives. This is the case of anti-clericalism in France. Anti-clerical feeling remains strong, at least among the intelligentsia, without there being much in the way of countervailing clericalism to oppose.

Even the few remaining believing Catholics in what was once called the eldest daughter of the Church do not believe that there should be a formal link between Church and state, or that Catholicism should be imposed upon the population. However, intellectuals often prefer to fight phantoms rather than realities, just as mice indulge in displacement activities in the face of overwhelming danger.

Anti-Fascism

Another such case is that of anti-fascism, allegedly in conflict to the death with fascism. Most of the young people who call themselves anti-fascist have very little idea of what fascism actually was, having been brought up in unprecedented prosperity and security. They know that it was bad, of course, but then make the logical mistake of thinking that anything that they consider bad must be fascist.

Real fascism, of the Mussolini variety, is very uncommon. I once attended a real fascist rally in Naples, which managed to unite the seeming opposites of nastiness and preposterousness. It was addressed by Mussolini's granddaughter, Alessandra, who at the time was more Gina Lollobrigida than Duce.

Nevertheless, to hear a crowd (of about four hundred) of evidently frustrated and bitter old men chant Duce! Duce!

Duce! in unison was disconcerting to say the least and gave some faint intimation of how terrifying it might have been if the crowd had been of 400,000 rather than of 400.

Now it so happened that I briefly attended a small anti-fascist rally in [Epoch Times](#).