

Critical Observations on National Socialist 'Racism'

Julius Evola, from "A Traditionalist Confronts Fascism"

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he speech recently delivered by Adolf Hitler at the cultural conference of the National Socialist Party at Nuremberg, which was reproduced by the German press with the title, 'Profession of Heroic Faith', deserves attention in our opinion for the elements it offers for understanding the famous doctrine of race that plays such an important part in the ideology of the revolution of the swastika, as is known. In fact we are dealing with official expressions of the head of this movement, which are bound to express what aspects of this doctrine National Socialism has adopted in the most official and unambiguous way. We shall here describe the principal concepts explained by Chancellor Hitler, adding to them a brief comment.

The first point, which was emphasised as a general premise, is a curious mixture of naturalism and faith in providence. It is curious, because a truly theological fatalism is placed at the foundation of a heroic vision, which directly recalls the Protestant doctrine of absolute predestination. 'Providence', says Hitler in so many words, 'has willed that men are not equal. It has determined a plurality of races and for each one has fixed special gifts and characteristics, which cannot be changed without incurring degeneration and decadence.' This is a double predestination, biological and psychic at the same time. The worldviews of the various races corresponds to their intimate biological and morphological laws by which they are constrained, and which can sometimes be obvious and sometimes hidden, but which does not change essentially in the course of centuries. From this proceeds a cultural and spiritual pluralism, which in its time

entered in open conflict with the universalistic views of, and was intoned catholically by, the party of the centre. Every race has its own truths and worldviews.

Hitler explicitly denies that it is possible to speak in absolute terms of a given worldview being right or wrong. A worldview can be called right or wrong only in relation to a definite race, its goals and its will to existence and power. A truth, he says, which 'is more natural to one stock, because it is innate in it and suitable for the manifestation of its life, can signify not only a serious danger but absolutely the end, in different situations, for another people who are formed differently'. Universalism and internationalism are synonyms for uncertainty, the decadence of instinct, and the loss of contact with the deepest forces of one's own people. If we may define as universal the vision in which all ethnic differences enter into a naturalistic and temporal plane, beyond which there exists a unique truth and a super-political Christian society, in which there is neither Aryan or Semite, neither European nor Asian, and so on — then it is certainly not possible to define the doctrine expounded by Hitler as 'orthodox', once we grant, of course, that it has been thought through and developed without intellectual compromises.

Some critical considerations are in order, however. Above all we are tempted to ask: if every truth is linked to a race and is true only for it alone, whether the very truth according to which this pluralism is believed in should be acknowledged as true only for one race, being prescribed by its particular characteristics, or whether it is a truth for all races universally and super-racially. It is the embarrassing and contradictory situation to which every form of relativism in general is condemned. In the act of proclaiming itself true,

relativism comes to assume, mutatis mutandis,[1] precisely the characters of absolutism and universalism. But let us leave to one side this objection, which is of a general and speculative nature. One positive aspect must certainly be acknowledged in Hitler's position: his reaction against rationalist, Enlightenment, and democratic myths of European decadence. The doctrine of race is a positive value, insofar as it signifies the primacy of quality over quantity, of the differentiated over the formless, of the organic over the mechanical, and especially insofar as it proposes the ideal of a profound and living unity between spirit and life, thought and race, culture and instinct. Nevertheless, a similar ideal — concerning content — still remains undefined. Secondly, the ideal is something that, to be valid, needs to be liberated from both its fatalistic background and the naturalistic element.

About the first point, accepting the task of a creative synthesis between the innate idea of a race and the material conditions that are imposed on it, all the way to a 'crystal-clear conformity to the goal' — kristallklar effüllten Zweckmässigkeit — is not the same thing as resolving the fundamental problem: what content, case by case, must be active in this synthesis? How to recognise what is the task of one race, and therefore 'true', and not of another race? Here Hitler seems to be inclined towards a solution that is pragmatic — that is, practical and empiricist — when he says that it is difficult to rule on the correctness of a particular vision, that is, its right to be valid for a particular race, except on the basis of the consequences and effects that result from it among the men who have assumed it. This view becomes problematic, and we might almost say, 'experimental'. The famous predestination on the part of 'providence' becomes a myth that serves at best as a 'force-idea'; that is, it reinforces

suggestively a given vocation or persuasion. Nothing is objectively said about a criterion that can justify a priori and link precisely a given mission or truth to a given race. It is a little curious that Hitler conceives heroism itself as a mere 'datum'. Just as cats or elephants give birth to offspring of their own species and each species has its own characteristics, so also heroes or non-heroes would beget heroic or non-heroic offspring. The heroic man thinks and acts heroically by nature and racial characteristics, or rather by predestination, not by a free inner action. Hitler also said that every action that does not conform to the innate ethnic and spiritual characteristic is only a way of decadence. So, for instance, in every race predestined to be non-heroic, every effort to assume heroic truth and raise oneself heroically would be a way of decadence.

There is an additional issue. A fundamental point is the difference of 'Nordic and Aryan' man from the characteristics of the man of other races. This point is not resolved by Hitler — at least in the context of the speech we are now examining — insofar as he simply describes, as being characteristic of 'Nordic and Aryan man', the traits of having always produced 'a determining synthesis among the tasks set before him, his goal, and the given material', both in antiquity and in modern times, by means of his free creative spirit. In fact this difference is reduced to the difference between people who know how to organically realise their nature in their own lifestyle and people who do not. But are there not, perhaps, different lifestyles? 'Classically' realising one's own mode of being is an ideal that can be achieved on the basis of characteristics that may be Hellenic or Hebraic, Japanese or German. The concept remains undefined and the characteristic traits of the famous 'Nordic and Aryan' element remain unclear. More positively, Hitler hints at an opposition due to an innate

inclination in certain races to transcend the naturalistic element, the primitive substratum of existence, in order to transform the general traits of one's own life. This is, however, only a hint. He barely touches on everything that was inspired by the 'supernatural' and 'twice-born' (dvija) character belonging to the arya in opposition to the asurya in the ancient traditions, the 'dark' man who is dominated by the 'demonic' element of nature.

Moreover, a further question is posed from the critical viewpoint. Granted that Hitler is not thinking of raising up seers capable of directly learning the foreordained plans of divine providence to order the different tasks and destinies of the races; granted that, as we have seen, there is no criterion to a priori determine the spiritual element that a given race will have to achieve demiurgically — the danger exists of ending in pure naturalism, and so in materialism. We mean that we can always suspect that, instead of a creative and heroic adherence of the race to the idea, there would be a simple subordination of the idea to what is given as race. In other words, the simple constitution of a given race, what is found to exist naturalistically or even (in the empirical sense) historically, and whatever it acquires by a brute will to existence and power, could become the only criteria by which that given race will pragmatically decide on the truth, validity, and congeniality of elements belonging to a higher plane, whether metabiological, spiritual, or cultural.

We want to emphasise the importance of this consideration, which highlights the reef on which racism could end up. Especially in today's world, with the breaking out of forces of an inferior and collective character on every side, it is essential to consider this dilemma: either spirit that gives form to race (particularly a nation) or race (nation) that gives form to spirit. Still more briefly:

either determination from above or determination from below. People who believe that there is something fallacious and quibbling in this juxtaposition are not aware of one of the greatest problems on the contemporary political horizon. As we have already shown on other occasions in this journal, there exist two distinct types of racism and nationalism: one is spiritual, the other materialist and subversive. The fact that both constitute a contrast to democratic and internationalist levelling and liberalist disintegration should not lead us to confuse them in the least. In one case, we have the emergence of a pre-personal (and therefore promiscuous) substratum of a given stock, which as 'soul of the race' acquires a mystic nimbus, claims for itself a sovereign right, and does not acknowledge any value in spirit, intellectualism, and culture except insofar as they transform themselves into tools in the service of a temporal and political entity. In this case, race and nation really establish a disintegrating pluralism and set themselves up in a multiplicity of antagonistic concepts, which by their nature cannot admit any higher and unitary reference point. This is when racism acquires a sense that is ethnically and collectivistically conditioned, which we have said to be in inevitable contrast with any universalist vision, such as, for instance, Catholicism's.

But things are very different when nation and race are presented truly and not rhetorically as spiritual and transcendent concepts, when what stands at the centre is no longer blood nor collective soul nor a tradition in the vulgar empirical sense, nor the brute will to existence and power of a group. No! It is precisely an idea, almost like a determining force from above. This is not the place — and anyhow we have written about this extensively in books — but we can at least mention that this character has been found in every higher type of

civilisation and traditional state in antiquity, and especially among the Aryan peoples. In this case, racism's correctness is limited to this point: recognising that the formative action of forces that are higher than nature upon nature itself — that is, on the element that is naturalistic and biologically conditioned — must be so deep as to be translated into a definite heredity and definite 'form' or 'style' of life, which is common to a given group. It remains equally clear, however, that this heredity, form, or style is not explained in itself, does not have its own principle in itself, and is not a mere 'datum', as might be true of the characteristics of an animal species. Rather they are appearances and almost signs and consecrations of a conquest and a higher force.

Hitler wrote, 'Greeks and Romans found themselves so close to Germans because they had their roots in a single fundamental race, which is why the immortal creations of the ancient peoples exercise an attraction on their descendants who are racially related to them.' It seems to us, on the other hand, that this very question should lead to something more than mere racism. In particular, Romans and Germans agreed with one another and understood one another — and created the strongest type of civilisation that Europe has ever known — in a period, the imperial Middle Ages, that was dominated not by racist particularism, but by a universal idea. The Middle Ages shows us one of the most distinct examples of a super-political and super-national unity, which acted formatively from above and according to a single principle that, far from being smashed by ethnic egoisms and nationalistic prevarications, ended up being applied to different races in different forms, but also such as to create, through an intimate affinity of spirit, a corpus, a grandiose and marvelous ordinatio ad unum,[2] in which the individual does not end up frustrated but

spiritually integrated.

As much as we have studied not only Hitler's writings, but also the writings of the chief National Socialist ideologues, it is still not clear to us if, in the last instance, the deep soul of the revolutionary current of the swastika is oriented toward one or the other of the two directions we discussed above. The fundamental problem of the Europe of the future seems to us to be the following: overcoming the internationalist collapse and being reintegrated into values of quality, race, and difference; in such a way, however, so as not to end up in the pluralism of closed unities and of ideas that have passed into the service of matter and empirical politics, but instead in a way that leaves open the possibility of the formation of a higher, ecumenical reality that is suited to unite the nations in spirit, in a manly way, without confusing them in body.

The future will tell us in what direction the German restoration will end up orienting itself. For now it is clear that, insofar as Fascism has indissolubly joined to the idea of nation and stock a higher universal idea — the idea of Rome — it has already decisively placed the symbol that alone can have a positive value in the range of the problem we have discussed.

[1] Latin: 'by the right of one's office'.—Ed.

[2] Latin: 'orientation towards the One', meaning God. This concept, first outlined by Saint Augustine, was one of the underlying principles of Christian and political thought during the Middle Ages.—Ed.