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The *parrhesia* of neo-fascism

Victor Shammass

Work Research Institute (AFI),

Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway

ABSTRACT

In his late lectures, Foucault developed the ancient Greek concept of *parrhesia*, a courage to speak the truth in the face of danger. While not entirely uncritical of the notion, Foucault seemed to find something of an ideal in the political and aesthetic ideal of *franc-parler*, of speaking freely and courageously. Simultaneously, post-1968 political thought valorized the ideal of *parrhesia*, or “speaking truth to power”: *parrhesia* seemed inherently progressive, the sole preserve of the left. But a cursory inspection of the annals of Nazism and fascism shows that these movements also aligned themselves with *parrhesiastical* modes of expression. The fragmented, disparate strands of today’s neo-fascist revival, too, are closely imbricated with the notion of speaking valiantly in the face of supposed orthodoxies: in many ways, the preeminent *parrhesiasts* today are found on the neo-fascist side. This points to an essential weakness in the concept of *parrhesia*, particularly in terms of its value and valence as a strategy for the political left. Perhaps it matters less how we speak—being caught up in language games—than what policies and programs we enact. Žižek’s plea for a renewed dogmatic orthodoxy and Chesterton’s criticism of heresy offer ways out of the *parrhesiastical* trap.

KEYWORDS

parrhesia, Foucault, Žižek, neo-fascism, political language, practice

I. Introduction

The specific appeal of fascism lies in its lurid fun – its obscenely pleasurable dimension. Understanding the revival of neo-fascism today means taking seriously how it appeals to enjoyment, and more specifically, to its distinctly *parrhesiastical* dimension: its willingness to “go to the end,” to “speak truth to power,” as the old leftist trope has it, or to “say what cannot be said.”

In his late lectures, Foucault repeatedly returns to the ancient Greek notion of parrhesia, which recent scholars have defined as the “courage to tell truth” (Brion and Harcourt 2014: 287) or “speaking truthfully, freely and being up-front...being open, transparent, engaging and saying everything there is to say” (Dyrberg 2014: 2). Foucault clearly imbues the word with a certain degree of approbation, this courage to “say what has to be said, what we want to say, what we think ought to be said because it is necessary, useful, and true” (Foucault 2005: 366): politically, it could serve as an instrument of emancipation (for wasn’t this the purpose of Foucault’s *Groupe d’information sur les prisons*, this dissemination of dangerous “information” about conditions inside France’s prisons in the 1970s?); ethically, it is a mark of bravery, the kind of courage that Eribon (1991: 263-267) hails in Foucault’s own practical life, as when Foucault confronted Spain’s fascist police over a series of death sentences against anti-Franco dissidents.

Importantly, as Foucault points out, someone deploys parrhesia, or is a parrhesiast, only to the extent that they take risks in producing their utterances: parrhesia is that by which “there is a risk or a danger...in telling the truth” (Foucault 2001: 16). Foucault offers the example of a schoolteacher: a teacher who speaks truthfully to their students does not qualify as a parrhesiast if there is no risk to the teacher in speaking – teaching the curriculum and preparing students for a final exam is simply going along with the institutional logic of the school. But, says Foucault, “when a philosopher addresses himself to a sovereign, to a tyrant, and tells him that his tyranny is disturbing and unpleasant because tyranny is incompatible with justice,” then we are dealing with a parrhesiastical situation, because the philosopher “takes a risk” since “the tyrant may become angry, may punish him, may exile him, may kill him” (ibid.). Plato is the parrhesiastical figure par excellence because he was a philosopher who demonstrated “courage in the face of danger” (ibid.). To fully speak the truth, then, we must risk life and limb, or at least certain material goods and social advantages.

Foucault was not so naïve as to fail to recognize the limitations of parrhesia. In his readings of ancient Greek sources, Foucault observes that one problem under democracy is that of the “worst citizens,” as he somewhat unkindly glosses them (later echoed in Hillary Clinton’s infamous “basket of deplorables”), that is, those who have come under the influence of sophistical, demagogical speakers, who “may lead the citizenry into tyranny, or may otherwise endanger the city. Hence parrhesia may be dangerous for democracy itself” (2001: 77). Later Foucault notes that the problem of truth-telling is that of recognizing when truth has been spoken – what has been termed the “criterion problem” in the skeptical philosophy of thinkers like Sextus Empiricus (see e.g. Westphal 2009). One could, after all, imagine what we might call a *misparrhesiast*, someone who runs a risk to themselves but only utters falsities. Thus, Foucault asks, “How can we distinguish the good, truth-telling teachers from the bad or inessential ones?” (2001: 95). Parrhesia presupposes that we have some method of distinguishing false truth-claims from true ones, even though, as Žižek (2008: 3) points out, “there is no way to draw a definitive line of separation between sophism, sophistic exercises, and Truth itself (this is Plato’s problem).” Courage cannot in and of itself be a sufficient sign of truth.

One could also read this later concept in Foucault’s work against his earlier work. Simpson highlights “an apparent contradiction: Foucault appears to advocate a practice of truthful speech, while also being committed, as many commentators have shown, to the project of showing truth to be produced, intermeshed with power relations, and situate” (2012: 100). In other words, while Foucault seems to sympathize with the ancient Greek gesture of speaking fearlessly in the face of tyrants and oligarchs—indeed, to have imitated this practice in his own life, as with the anti-Franco press conference in Madrid in 1975—his whole body of work on discursive formations seems to preclude the possibility of a pure instance of “really truthful” parrhesia. While Žižek has not written on Foucault’s conception of “speaking frankly,” as Foucault (2001: 11) translates the notion in one place, a plausible Žižekian response to it would probably be one of skepticism.

II. The vacuity of courage

One plausible ground for such skepticism lies in the fact that the exponent of parrhesiastical truths is always a socially legitimized, consecrated figure – someone who is *nominated* to speak courageously by particular institutions, media actors, and

political elites. Western liberalism tends to fetishize various “valiant” figures, such as Nobel Peace Prize winners, ideal witnesses to human suffering, usually in the world’s poorer parts, who are often introduced to wider audiences in such a way and according to particular selection mechanisms so that their diagnoses do not overstep their bounds – crucially, they usually do not assign blame to Western neo-colonialist warfare and military exploits or the machinations of corporations and consumers. The world is full of these ironic parrhesiasts: individuals who are permitted to speak “dangerous” truths that are only sufficiently dangerous so as to harm the usual suspects – dictators and autocrats, cultural barbarism and fundamentalist religiosity, for instance, and rarely, say, American wars in the Middle East or capital’s exploitation of cheap, docile labor. Western elites love a good parrhesiast – from Liu Xiaobo to Shirin Ebadi – so long as they are *our* parrhesiasts, so long as they speak *our* dangerous truths. In a sense, then, this accords with Žižek’s vision of what philosophy, or critical thought, is fundamentally about: “I think that the task of philosophy is not to provide answers, but to show how the way we perceive a problem can be itself part of a problem” (Žižek 2011). The role of the philosopher, *sensu lato*, is not to take on the role of a parrhesiast but to poke and prod at those who think of themselves as such – to interrogate the ways the self-congratulatory overtones of parrhesia tend to reproduce what Žižek (2006) calls the “unknown knowns” of ideology.

Who are the preeminent parrhesiasts of the postindustrialized world today? They are not of the left but of the right. In a remarkably prescient statement, Žižek observed in a 2004 interview the dangers of abdicating this ground to forces unknown, observing that “we should rehabilitate the sense of full commitment and the courage to take risks” (Žižek and Glady 2004: 108). It is the right that seems to possess the force of a parrhesiastical fervor now. Its self-identity is that it is a movement willing to utter truths that the left and the liberal establishment dare not speak. As Marine Le Pen said of Trump’s 2016 election victory, “He made possible what had previously been presented as impossible” (BBC 2016). In Europe, this usually takes the form of attacking the “free flow” of refugees from the postcolonial world. In the United States, it combines noxious attacks on Mexican immigrants with a refusal to submit to free-trade agreements and an unwillingness to shoulder the costs of its global military dominion, as with Trump’s admonitions to NATO member states that they must assume a greater share of the alliance’s defense expenditures.

In some measure, we might even say that the right is the “left” of today, in the very specific sense that it carries with it the same sort of heterodoxical vigor that the left long prided itself on. Insurgency against dominant elites and power structures is one of the hallmarks of the left, but the right has largely overtaken this mantle, usurping the left’s monopoly on parrhesiastical “insubmission.” It is not a coincidence that Michel Houellebecq’s paranoiac novel envisioning a future “Eurabian” France overrun by Islamic fundamentalism is entitled *Soumission* (or *Submission* in its English translation) – that is, the “submission” of cultural elites that Houellebecq seems to believe will facilitate this political outcome; while, on the other hand, Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s radical leftist movement is called Insoumission—“insubmission”—that is, a refusal to accept the strictures of capital and the depredations of the Le Pen’s far-right party as well as the neoliberal agenda of center-right figures like Emmanuel Macron. In selecting these names, both figures attempt to extract the symbolic profits of a parrhesiastical politics: Houellebecq through its ironic negation (for the implication of his novel’s title is that we should not submit), Mélenchon through its direct negation.

The right’s moves onto the rhetorical terrain of the left should not surprise us. The left’s grasp on this symbolic ground—heresy and heterodoxy—has always been tenuous. If we look to the propaganda of Nazi Germany in the 1930s and Fascist Italy in the interwar period, we can see that these movements constantly prided themselves on speaking out against various silences and complicities of social orthodoxy. The desire to rid Europe of its Jewish populations was partly portrayed as a courageous act: monstrous, to be sure, but a courageous monstrousness, a willingness to do what was “necessary” where liberal elites had failed to act the part of socially responsible actors. Robert Ley, the leader of the German Labor Front from 1933 to 1945, thus attacked the Church for its criticisms of Nazi policy:

The priests then seem to have had the same weapons as their counterparts today: they count on human weakness and cowardice. We, however, build on human courage and manliness. That is the difference. We want to tell the people the truth, not console them with hopes of a better tomorrow (Ley 1939).

Ley claimed that only National Socialism had the courage to act, the willingness to go to the end: “The Jew or us, one of us will have to go.” In establishing this diabolical

ultimatum, Ley seems to wield the *skeptron* of the parrhesiastical speaker, the one who risks it all.

Similarly, in a 1923 speech, titled “The Government of Speed,” Mussolini argued that Fascism was the only political force that dared to match the frenzied pace of modernity:

The times in which we live no longer allow of a sedentary egoistical life; everything must be on the go, everybody must raise the standard of his activity, both in the offices and in the factories where the work is done— (Applause.)— and the Government, which I have the honour to represent, is the Government of speed, that is to say, we get rid of all that is stagnant in our national life (Mussolini 1923: 234).

Only fascism, Mussolini contended, had the courage to risk everything in a head-on collision with modernity's frenetic, accelerating drive. But courage is almost always in the eye of the beholder: Rudolf Hess called Hitler “the bravest of the brave,” emphasizing that the “National Socialist fighter is no coward” (Hess 1938). One person's monstrosity is another person's valiant behavior, a daring-to-act. This is how we should understand Goebbels's (1944) statement in his famous “total war” speech: “A river of readiness must flow through the German people.” Readiness, will, courage, even hope: are not these merely empty signifiers waiting to be filled with any political content whatsoever? One could even re-imagine—perverse though it might seem—the title of Obama's early memoirs, *The Audacity of Hope*, serving, too, as the title of some Nazi politician's autobiographical reminiscences. Were it not for its anachronistic tang, the same would seem to hold true for George W. Bush's *Decision Points*: having the courage to decide (Bush famously stated, “But I'm the decider, and I decide what's best”) has no political valence in and of itself: it, too, could be appropriated by any movement, left or right. This, of course, is in some sense the nature of political language: its essential vacuity, its infinite pliability, its flexible potential. But this is simultaneously why the left's unsteady monopoly on the language of heresy is such a precarious resource: if a political movement's claim to distinctiveness is its heterodox symbolic form, it leaves itself vulnerable to capture and re-appropriation by hostile movements far removed from its goals. It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that the alt-right, neo-fascist Milo Yiannopolous's (2017) memoirs are entitled *Dangerous* (self-

published under the tellingly named imprint, Dangerous Books), where he takes great delight in describing himself as “a fire-starter and troublemaker,” a “critical voice in the pushback against political correctness,” a “threat because I don’t belong to anyone” – in short, a parrhesiast. This, I think, points to the essential limitations of the concept of parrhesia for progressive struggles.

It was the liberal centrism of the 1990s and 2000s that opened up a space for neo-fascist forces to take up this rhetorical posture. What did the liberal centrists of this era want? They lacked all momentous visions, any coherent project, any significant desire to remake the world. Following in the footsteps of Žižek’s penchant for popular-cultural analyses, one can see the strange impotence of the centrist politics of figures like Clinton, Obama, and their related counterparts in Europe (from the Norwegian social democrat Jens Stoltenberg to Britain’s Gordon Brown) on display in a political thriller like *House of Cards*. The fictional Democrat and (later) President Garrett Walker wants power, pure and simple, but rarely do we see any actual sustained engagement with crafting *political change*. There is no program, no coherent ideology to sustain his agenda: merely the tinkering, intrigue, and backstabbing of a high-level operator of the Washington political class. One might object that this is beside the point: after all, the purpose of the series is precisely to show that the political class is *fallen*, and that the absence of any repeated effort at constructing a world on the basis of a political program therefore is, in some sense, the message of the creators of the series. It is the absence of *desire* for anything—pure desire, an empty, self-involved desire that turns in on itself—that is the point and purpose of *House of Cards* and its source of insights into the real centrist politics of the Euro-American world in our age.

It is against this backdrop that a figure like Trump enters as a true shock. Here we see, inter alia, a political actor who (says that he) really wants to *do* something. And while most of his policy positions are probably bad-faith pronouncements never destined to become reality (for how could a state spend a trillion dollars on infrastructure while cutting taxes to the tune of \$1.5 trillion?), Trump’s 2015 campaign promise to sign a trillion-dollar infrastructure investment bill revealed a willingness to return to a kind of social democracy – a *twisted* social democracy, certainly, because it was premised on outpourings of nativist scorn, evangelical conservatism, and business-friendly cronyism, but nevertheless marking a desire to intervene in the world, and to engage in the sorts of reconstructive efforts that European social democrats and American mainstream Democrats seem to have long since forgotten how to

undertake. Trump's success lies in part in his (fake) anti-neoliberalism, to put a modifier on a modifier, and his promise to protect the "little guy" from the ravages of an unrestrained market.

Again, this paternal, almost pastoral promise to protect the American public from market forces is best viewed with hindsight as a bad-faith promise, undermined by extensive tax cuts to the rich and a fundamental inability to get his constructive program off the ground. But its fundamental economist tenor is so different from that of the thinly fictionalized politics of Bill Clinton as shown in the film *Primary Colors* (1998), where the actor John Travolta plays Jack Stanton, a presidential candidate modeled on Clinton. (Clinton was said to have enjoyed the film so much that he invited Travolta—in character—to a party where the two of them delivered a speech together). In one of the film's most remarkable scenes, Stanton speaks before a stereotypically blue-collar audience in a now-quiet factory. There Stanton's Clintonesque message is that nothing can be done to save their jobs. Instead, the onus is on these laid-off workers to make the necessary adjustments to an economic order that no political force can hope to contain:

No politician can re-open this factory or bring back the shipyard jobs or make your union strong again. No politician can make it the way it was. Because we now live in a world without economic borders. Push a button in New York and a billion dollars moves to Tokyo. In that world, muscle jobs go where muscle labor is cheap, and that is not here. So to compete, you have to exercise a different muscle: the one between your ears. [...] The whole country must go back to school. [...] But you have to do the heavy lifting your own selves.

How different this is from Trump's repeated insistence that he *is* capable of bringing blue-collar jobs back to America: "And we're going to bring jobs back. We're going to bring jobs back, big league" (New York Times 2016). Trump has also insisted that "we want to bring back trillions of dollars in wealth parked overseas. We want this money invested right here in America. You have close to \$3 trillion, and it could be much more than that. Nobody really knows what the number is, but we know it's substantially more than \$2.5 trillion. And that money is overseas, and that money will come pouring back based on what we're doing and the incentives that we're giving" (Factbase 2017). The point is not whether these proposals are realistic or even sincere, but that they have

been made at all, over against the Stanton-Clinton creed of do-nothing, of throwing up one's hands to the money-idol and confessing powerlessness in the face of "blind" market forces – which are always coproduced by the state, as Bourdieu (2005) reminds us. In this sense, Trump's *franc-parler*, or parrhesia, consists in his willingness to violate the *doxa* of liberalism, this ideological current that Žižek aptly diagnoses as a "blend of economic liberalism with a minimally 'authoritarian' spirit of community...that counteracts the system's excesses—in other words what Third Way social-democrats such as Blair have been developing" (2008: 2).

Besides this overtly political sort of parrhesia, Trump constantly engages in the vulgar free play of his obscene mind. Trump's vulgarities point to a crucial defect in Foucault's concept: the willingness to engage in *franc-parler* comes crashing up against certain basic features of civility: in some sense, we should not want others to speak "freely" because a certain minimal obfuscation of reality is necessary for the social game to function. If we were to say everything on our minds, social life would become nearly impossible. Lies, as Ibsen points out in *The Wild Duck*, are constitutive features of human sociability. Trump is a figure who speaks his mind, who speaks (his version of) the "truth." But it is an obscenity-filled mind and a vulgar sort of truth—from his allusion to the menstrual cycles of his interlocutor, the NBC reporter Megyn Kelly, and Hillary Clinton's bathroom break during one of the televised presidential debates as "too disgusting" to talk about (a claim that was, of course, negated by the fact that he *did* talk about it). It is against this parrhesiastical vulgarity of those in power that Žižek emphasizes that what we should strive for is a certain measure of decorousness: against the physical and verbal violence of parrhesiastical power, Žižek emphasizes that "progressives should become the voice of common decency, politeness, [and] good manners" (Wofford 2017).

III. Against heresy

Recall that parrhesia is the "act of telling all," as Foucault says, a "frankness, open-heartedness, plain speaking, speaking openly, speaking freely" (2005: 366). Who are these frank speakers today? They belong to the right. They pride themselves on saying what cannot be said, what the "damned, compact, liberal majority," Ibsen calls it in *An Enemy of the People*, supposedly prohibits them from saying. Though the choice seems almost arbitrary, immigration is a favored target, as evidenced in this fragment of a speech by the UK Independence Party (UKIP) founder Nigel Farage:

The British Social Attitudes Survey shows how much Britain has been moving UKIP's way. [...] Yes, on immigration. It's the biggest single issue facing this country. It affects the economy. The NHS. Schools. Public services. The deficit. But the establishment has been closing down the immigration debate for 20 years. UKIP has opened it up. We need to. [...] Let's have that debate! Openly. We need to talk about it! (The Spectator 2013)

This is the perhaps preeminent parrhesiastical maneuver in today's politics of neo-fascism: this "*we need to talk about it!*" (...but we cannot because the compact majority prohibits us from saying what needs to be said), this *performative piety* in the face of allegedly oppressive cultural elites, this *heretical construction* of a whole series of social problems portrayed as though they are closed off to free, frank debate.

How, then, do we go about confronting this logic? First, by ceasing to make a fetish of courageous speech. Parrhesia is a heroism-in-words, and this is precisely what is wrong with it. Rhetorical courage is overvalued. While there was a historical moment when it really seemed as though parrhesia was a uniquely progressive rhetorical posture, or that parrhesia was inherently of the left—we might think of post-1968 emancipatory rhetoric, the voicing of outrage by or on behalf of exploited or oppressed minorities of all kinds—it is now increasingly clear that it is instead an empty signifying structure, which can readily be appropriated by movement of all political colors and shades; the exception is, perhaps, political centrism, which tends to eschew the pathos of courage and instead values "responsible" speech. Without committing a *reduction ad Hitlerum* (but this censoring term itself prevents any meaningful social learning from the traumatic history of fascism), we must recognize that parrhesia was always crucial to interwar fascism and Nazism – just as it remains key to American Trumpism, European radical "populism" (but these "populists" are not so popular that they could claim the *popolo* to themselves), and the resurgence of neo-fascism, either in its violent white-supremacist form or in its more palatable, electable guise.

Second, and related to this first insight, we must refuse to get caught up in the language games of the far-right, which are usually little more than a high-flown form of *trolling*. We might take note of how parrhesia is operative on two fronts: it requires a "truth" to be uttered (with all the necessary caveats that these "truths" must enter a discursive field or political landscape where these utterances are read as true or come

to be read as true), and, secondly, it requires that the speaker runs a risk or is confronted with a form of danger. From the perspective of neo-fascist parrhesiasts, it is intellectual and cultural elites that create these risks: it is their *response* to the (would-be) parrhesiastical utterance that determines whether it really counts as “dangerous.” It is dangerous only in so far as one allows them to feel that their words are risky. The solution, then, seems obvious: ignore their words, disregard their enunciations, refuse to recognize them.

This is, incidentally, exactly the same sort of strategy that Žižek advocates when confronted by violent, inflammatory figures like the American white supremacist Richard Spencer:

If a guy talks like that jerk [Richard Spencer], you should just ignore him. If he hits you, turn around. Don't even acknowledge him as a person. That's the type of violence I would call for. Not physical violence. Because, you know, people say symbolic violence can be even worse, but don't underestimate physical violence. [...] I'm not saying we should greet everyone, embrace them. Be brutal at a different level. When you encounter a guy like the one who was punched, act in such a way that even hitting him, even slapping him is too much of a recognition. You should treat him or her or whoever as a nonperson, literally.

The self-congratulatory talk of parrhesiastic bravery only conceals the absence of action – a lack of interventions in the material world. If the left is to win against the right, it cannot be on the basis of the rhetoric of parrhesia but due to its distinctive agenda for transforming the world.

If we take parrhesia to be related (if not wholly synonymous with) the notion of heretical discourse, its essential hollowness becomes more readily apparent. This was well understood by the writer and Catholic theologian G. K. Chesterton, who observed:

Nothing more strangely indicates an enormous and silent evil of modern society than the extraordinary use which is made nowadays of the word ‘orthodox.’ In former days the heretic was proud of not being a heretic. It was the kingdoms of the world and the police and the judges who were heretics. He was orthodox. He had no pride in having rebelled against them; they had rebelled against him.

[...] The man was proud of being orthodox, was proud of being right. (Chesterton 1905: 11)

With this homily in hand, the power of parrhesia loses its edge: a blunt sword, like one of those false scimitars you can buy in tourist markets filled with trinkets, which look sharp to the passer-by, but on closer inspection is actually entirely dull and lacks all the sting of a real rapier. A truly radical discourse has no need for the self-congratulatory nature of parrhesia, of heresy in this anti-Chestertonian sense. Parrhesia sets itself up as a heresy, and therefore adores itself, but as Chesterton notes, the real power of heresy lies in its capacity to establish itself as a new orthodoxy – a new dogma. “The word ‘heresy’ not only means no longer being wrong; it practically means being clear-headed and courageous. The word ‘orthodoxy’ not only no longer means being right; it practically means being wrong” (Chesterton 1905: 12). But this gets it all wrong: the point of heresy is to establish itself as an orthodoxy, not to linger in the desert of the “clear-headed and courageous.” Bourdieu broaches a similar point: “As soon as the heterodox appear, the orthodox are obliged to appear as such; the *doxa* is obliged to make itself explicit as orthodoxy when it is challenged by a heresy. The dominant are generally silent, they do not have a philosophy, a discourse” (Bourdieu 2014: 184). But while Bourdieu thinks this speaks to the favor of the heterodox, we could also read him as outlining a desirable position: the usurpation of the comforts of orthodoxy, of being able to make do without “a philosophy or discourse,” of finding peace in a theoretical position that then allows one to finally – *do*. In other words: to build a world.

Isn't this the ultimate point of the parrhesiastical position – to attain a position of dominance, to remove all risks and dangers attendant upon enunciations, where the homeless condition of humanity can be cured? The purpose of the political does not seem to be to fasten in endless risk-takings and rhetorical dangers, as Žižek (2018), too, emphasizes in outlining the case for the importance establishing new dogmas:

[A]fter being told that critics had complained that there were too many old clichés in his films, Sam Goldwyn wrote a memo to his scenario department: 'We need more new clichés!' He was right, and this is a revolution's most difficult task - to create 'new clichés' for ordinary daily life.

In this sense, the parrhesiastical strategy of neo-fascism has thus far been a failure - failing to set itself up as a discourse-less discourse above all other discourses: it remains too contested to be above reproach.

Rerouting the parrhesiastical recruitment channel into neo-fascism means taking the fun out of “shocking” acts of (supposed) truth-telling (and violating orthodoxies and “home truths” can be *immensely* pleasurable), whose aim is precisely to elicit a horrified reaction: in other words, to refuse to go along with the back-and-forth game of astonishment (on our part) and (false) piety (on theirs). This is, in truth, a parlor game with rather high stakes. Rather than be shocked at pronouncements *whose very purpose is to elicit shock*, a political strategy capable of counteracting neo-fascism would entail exiting language games of neo-fascism’s making and instead attempt to intervene directly in the material world, to engage in concerted efforts to *build* the world rather than be caught in various discursive games *about* the world – from creating stable, high-paying jobs to ramping up infrastructure investments to constructing ecologically sound economies, and, in the long-run, to move beyond the capitalist horizon.

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