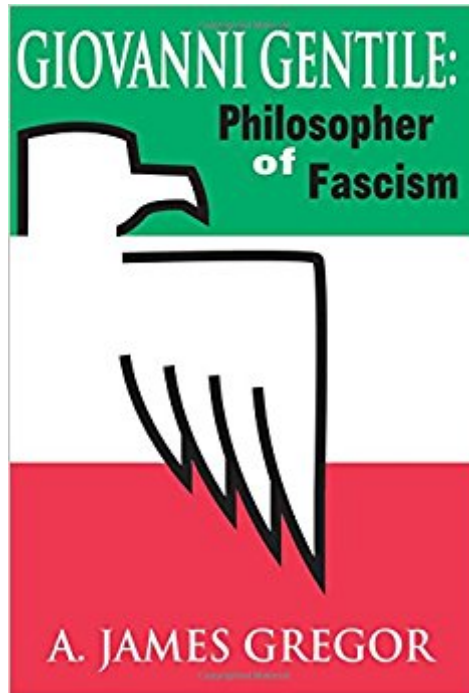




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Giovanni Gentile: Philosopher Of Fascism



Synopsis

The recent rise in Europe of extreme right-wing political parties along with outbreaks of violent nationalist fervor in the former communist bloc has occasioned much speculation on a possible resurgence of fascism. At the polemical level, fascism has become a generic term applied to virtually any form of real or potential violence, while among Marxist and left-wing scholars discredited interpretations of fascism as a "product of late capitalism" are revived. Empty of cognitive significance, these formulas disregard the historical and philosophical roots of fascism as it arose in Italy and spread throughout Europe. In *Giovanni Gentile: Philosopher of Fascism*, A. James Gregor returns to those roots by examining the thought of Italian Fascism's major theorist. In Gregor's reading of Gentile, fascism was-and remains-an anti-democratic reaction to what were seen to be the domination by advanced industrial democracies of less-developed or status-deprived communities and nations languishing on the margins of the "Great Powers." Sketching in the political background of late nineteenth-century Italy, industrially backward and only recently unified, Gregor shows how Gentile supplied fascism its justificatory rationale as a developmental dictatorship. Gentile's Actualism (as his philosophy came to be identified) absorbed many intellectual currents of the early twentieth century including nationalism, syndicalism, and futurism and united them in a dynamic rebellion against new perceived hegemonic impostures of imperialism. The individual was called to an idealistic ethic of obedience, work, self-sacrifice, and national community. As Gregor demonstrates, it was a paradigm of what we can expect in the twenty-first century's response, on the part of marginal nations, to the globalization of the industrialized democracies. Gregor cites post-Maoist China, nationalist Russia, Africa, and the Balkans at the development stage from which fascism could grow. The first book-length analysis in English of Gentile's thought in over thirty years, this volume is valuable not only as a work of historical scholarship but as a timely warning. While Marxism-Leninism has passed into history, fascism may yet reemerge as an external threat to democratic nations.

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"A. James Gregor advances a controversial thesis. The critical reader will recognize this as an impressive work of scholarship. It is based on original source materials, placed in historical perspective, and subjected to thoughtful examination. Gregor has done what every historian should do: think, and challenge his readers to think for themselves. The result bears witness to intellectual integrity." —Richard A Cooper, The Pragmatist "Gregor's brief account of the life and political philosophy of one of the crucial figures in the history of Italian fascism analyzes Gentile's philosophy of actualism and its impact on Italian intellectual life during the fascist era (1922-43). . . . Recommended for upper-division undergraduates and above."

—Choice

A. James Gregor is professor of political science at the University of California at Berkeley and an adjunct professor at Command and Staff College, U.S. Marine Corps University at Quantico, Virginia. He has also been awarded the Order of Merit by the President of the Italian Republic for his contribution to Italy as a nation through his published works. He is the author of Giovanni Gentile: Philosopher of Fascism, Interpretations of Fascism, Phoenix: Fascism in Our Time, and Marxism, China, and Development, all published by Transaction.

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