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# THE PHILOSOPHIC BASIS OF FASCISM

*By Giovanni Gentile*

FOR the Italian nation the World War was the solution of a deep spiritual crisis. They willed and fought it long before they felt and evaluated it. But they willed, fought, felt and evaluated it in a certain spirit which Italy's generals and statesmen exploited, but which also worked on them, conditioning their policies and their action. The spirit in question was not altogether clear and self-consistent. That it lacked unanimity was particularly apparent just before and again just after the war when feelings were not subject to war discipline. It was as though the Italian character were crossed by two different currents which divided it into two irreconcilable sections. One need think only of the days of Italian neutrality and of the debates that raged between Interventionists and Neutralists. The ease with which the most inconsistent ideas were pressed into service by both parties showed that the issue was not between two opposing political opinions, two conflicting concepts of history, but actually between two different temperaments, two different souls.

For one kind of person the important point was to fight the war, either on the side of Germany or against Germany: but in either event to fight the war, without regard to specific advantages — to fight the war in order that at last the Italian nation, created rather by favoring conditions than by the will of its people to be a nation, might receive its test in blood, such a test as only war can bring by uniting all citizens in a single thought, a single passion, a single hope, emphasizing to each individual that all have something in common, something transcending private interests.

This was the very thing that frightened the other kind of person, the prudent man, the realist, who had a clear view of the mortal risks a young, inexperienced, badly prepared nation would be running in such a war, and who also saw — a most significant point — that, all things considered, a bargaining neutrality would surely win the country tangible rewards, as great as victorious participation itself.

The point at issue was just that: the Italian Neutralists stood for material advantages, advantages tangible, ponderable, palpable; the Interventionists stood for moral advantages, intangible,

impalpable, imponderable — imponderable at least on the scales used by their antagonists. On the eve of the war these two Italian characters stood facing each other, scowling and irreconcilable — the one on the aggressive, asserting itself ever more forcefully through the various organs of public opinion; the other on the defensive, offering resistance through the Parliament which in those days still seemed to be the basic repository of State sovereignty. Civil conflict seemed inevitable in Italy, and civil war was in fact averted only because the King took advantage of one of his prerogatives and declared war against the Central Powers.

This act of the King was the first decisive step toward the solution of the crisis.

## II

The crisis had ancient origins. Its roots sank deep into the inner spirit of the Italian people.

What were the creative forces of the *Risorgimento*? The "Italian people," to which some historians are now tending to attribute an important if not a decisive rôle in our struggle for national unity and independence, was hardly on the scene at all. The active agency was always an idea become a person — it was one or several determined wills which were fixed on determined goals. There can be no question that the birth of modern Italy was the work of the few. And it could not be otherwise. It is always the few who represent the self-consciousness and the will of an epoch and determine what its history shall be; for it is they who see the forces at their disposal and through those forces actuate the one truly active and productive force — their own will.

That will we find in the song of the poets and the ideas of the political writers, who know how to use a language harmonious with a universal sentiment or with a sentiment capable of becoming universal. In the case of Italy, in all our bards, philosophers and leaders, from Alfieri to Foscolo, from Leopardi to Manzoni, from Mazzini to Gioberti, we are able to pick up the threads of a new fabric, which is a new kind of thought, a new kind of soul, a new kind of Italy. This new Italy differed from the old Italy in something that was very simple but yet was of the greatest importance: this new Italy took life seriously, while the old one did not. People in every age had dreamed of an Italy and talked of an Italy. The notion of Italy had been sung in all kinds of music, propounded in all kinds of philosophy. But it was always

an Italy that existed in the brain of some scholar whose learning was more or less divorced from reality. Now reality demands that convictions be taken seriously, that ideas become actions. Accordingly it was necessary that this Italy, which was an affair of brains only, become also an affair of hearts, become, that is, something serious, something alive. This, and no other, was the meaning of Mazzini's great slogan: "Thought and Action." It was the essence of the great revolution which he preached and which he accomplished by instilling his doctrine into the hearts of others. Not many others — a small minority! But they were numerous enough and powerful enough to raise the question where it could be answered — in Italian public opinion (taken in conjunction with the political situation prevailing in the rest of Europe). They were able to establish the doctrine that life is not a game, but a mission; that, therefore, the individual has a law and a purpose in obedience to which and in fulfillment of which he alone attains his true value; that, accordingly, he must make sacrifices, now of personal comfort, now of private interest, now of life itself.

No revolution ever possessed more markedly than did the Italian *Risorgimento* this characteristic of ideality, of thought preceding action. Our revolt was not concerned with the material needs of life, nor did it spring from elementary and widely diffused sentiments breaking out in popular uprisings and mass disturbances. The movements of 1847 and 1848 were demonstrations, as we would say today, of "intellectuals;" they were efforts toward a goal on the part of a minority of patriots who were standard bearers of an ideal and were driving governments and peoples toward its attainment. Idealism — understood as faith in the advent of an ideal reality, as a manner of conceiving life not as fixed within the limits of existing fact, but as incessant progress and transformation toward the level of a higher law which controls men with the very force of the idea — was the sum and substance of Mazzini's teaching; and it supplied the most conspicuous characteristic of our great Italian revolution. In this sense all the patriots who worked for the foundation of the new kingdom were Mazzinians — Gioberti, Cavour, Victor Emmanuel, Garibaldi. To be sure, our writers of the first rank, such as Manzoni and Rosmini, had no historical connection with Mazzini; but they had the same general tendency as Mazzini. Working along diverging lines, they all came together on the

essential point: that true life is not the life which is, but also the life which ought to be. It was a conviction essentially religious in character, essentially anti-materialistic.

## III

This religious and idealistic manner of looking at life, so characteristic of the *Risorgimento*, prevails even beyond the heroic age of the revolution and the establishment of the Kingdom. It survives down through Ricasoli, Lanza, Sella and Minghetti, down, that is, to the occupation of Rome and the systemization of our national finances. The parliamentary overturn of 1876, indeed, marks not the end, but rather an interruption, on the road that Italy had been following since the beginning of the century. The outlook then changed, and not by the capriciousness or weakness of men, but by a necessity of history which it would be idiotic in our day to deplore. At that time the fall of the Right, which had ruled continuously between 1861 and 1876, seemed to most people the real conquest of freedom.

To be sure the Right cannot be accused of too great scruple in respecting the liberties guaranteed by our Constitution; but the real truth was that the Right conceived liberty in a sense directly opposite to the notions of the Left. The Left moved from the individual to the State: the Right moved from the State to the individual. The men of the Left thought of "the people" as merely the agglomerate of the citizens composing it. They therefore made the individual the center and the point of departure of all the rights and prerogatives which a régime of freedom was bound to respect.

The men of the Right, on the contrary, were firmly set in the notion that no freedom can be conceived except within the State, that freedom can have no important content apart from a solid régime of law indisputably sovereign over the activities and the interests of individuals. For the Right there could be no individual freedom not reconcilable with the authority of the State. In their eyes the general interest was always paramount over private interests. The law, therefore, should have absolute efficacy and embrace the whole life of the people.

This conception of the Right was evidently sound; but it involved great dangers when applied without regard to the motives which provoked it. Unless we are careful, too much law leads to stasis and therefore to the annihilation of the life which

it is the State's function to regulate but which the State cannot suppress. The State may easily become a form indifferent to its content — something extraneous to the substance it would regulate. If the law comes upon the individual from without, if the individual is not absorbed in the life of the State, the individual feels the law and the State as limitations on his activity, as chains which will eventually strangle him unless he can break them down.

This was just the feeling of the men of '76. The country needed a breath of air. Its moral, economic, and social forces demanded the right to develop without interference from a law which took no account of them. This was the historical reason for the overturn of that year; and with the transference of power from Right to Left begins the period of growth and development in our nation: economic growth in industry, commerce, railroads, agriculture; intellectual growth in science, education. The nation had received its form from above. It had now to struggle to its new level, giving to a State which already had its constitution, its administrative and political organization, its army and its finance, a living content of forces springing from individual initiative prompted by interests which the *Risorgimento*, absorbed in its great ideals, had either neglected or altogether disregarded.

The accomplishment of this constitutes the credit side of the balance sheet of King Humbert I. It was the error of King Humbert's greatest minister, Francesco Crispi, not to have understood his age. Crispi strove vigorously to restore the authority and the prestige of the State as against an individualism gone rampant, to reassert religious ideals as against triumphant materialism. He fell, therefore, before the assaults of so-called democracy.

Crispi was wrong. That was not the moment for re-hoisting the time-honored banner of idealism. At that time there could be no talk of wars, of national dignity, of competition with the Great Powers; no talk of setting limits to personal liberties in the interests of the abstract entity called "State." The word "God," which Crispi sometimes used, was singularly out of place. It was a question rather of bringing the popular classes to prosperity, self-consciousness, participation in political life. Campaigns against illiteracy, all kinds of social legislation, the elimination of the clergy from the public schools, which must be secular and anti-clerical! During this period Freemasonry became solidly

established in the bureaucracy, the army, the judiciary. The central power of the State was weakened and made subservient to the fleeting variations of popular will as reflected in a suffrage absolved from all control from above. The growth of big industry favored the rise of a socialism of Marxian stamp as a new kind of moral and political education for our proletariat. The conception of humanity was not indeed lost from view: but such moral restraints as were placed on the free individual were all based on the feeling that each man must instinctively seek his own well-being and defend it. This was the very conception which Mazzini had fought in socialism, though he rightly saw that it was not peculiar to socialism alone, but belonged to any political theory, whether liberal, democratic, or anti-socialistic, which urges men toward the exaction of rights rather than to the fulfillment of duties.

From 1876 till the Great War, accordingly, we had an Italy that was materialistic and anti-Mazzinian, though an Italy far superior to the Italy of and before Mazzini's time. All our culture, whether in the natural or the moral sciences, in letters or in the arts, was dominated by a crude positivism, which conceived of the reality in which we live as something given, something ready-made, and which therefore limits and conditions human activity quite apart from so-called arbitrary and illusory demands of morality. Everybody wanted "facts," "positive facts." Everybody laughed at "metaphysical dreams," at impalpable realities. The truth was there before the eyes of men. They had only to open their eyes to see it. The Beautiful itself could only be the mirror of the Truth present before us in Nature. Patriotism, like all the other virtues based on a religious attitude of mind, and which can be mentioned only when people have the courage to talk in earnest, became a rhetorical theme on which it was rather bad taste to touch.

This period, which anyone born during the last half of the past century can well remember, might be called the demo-socialistic phase of the modern Italian State. It was the period which elaborated the characteristically democratic attitude of mind on a basis of personal freedom, and which resulted in the establishment of socialism as the primary and controlling force in the State. It was a period of growth and of prosperity during which the moral forces developed during the *Risorgimento* were crowded into the background or off the stage.

## IV

But toward the end of the Nineteenth Century and in the first years of the Twentieth a vigorous spirit of reaction began to manifest itself in the young men of Italy against the preceding generation's ideas in politics, literature, science and philosophy. It was as though they were weary of the prosaic bourgeois life which they had inherited from their fathers and were eager to return to the lofty moral enthusiasms of their grandfathers. Rosmini and Gioberti had been long forgotten. They were now exhumed, read, discussed. As for Mazzini, an edition of his writings was financed by the State itself. Vico, the great Vico, a formidable preacher of idealistic philosophy and a great anti-Cartesian and anti-rationalist, became the object of a new cult.

Positivism began forthwith to be attacked by neo-idealism. Materialistic approaches to the study of literature and art were refuted and discredited. Within the Church itself modernism came to rouse the Italian clergy to the need of a deeper and more modern culture. Even socialism was brought under the philosophical probe and criticized like other doctrines for its weaknesses and errors; and when, in France, George Sorel went beyond the fallacies of the materialistic theories of the Marxist social-democracy to his theory of syndicalism, our young Italian socialists turned to him. In Sorel's ideas they saw two things: first, the end of a hypocritical "collaborationism" which betrayed both proletariat and nation; and second, faith in a moral and ideal reality for which it was the individual's duty to sacrifice himself, and to defend which, even violence was justified. The anti-parliamentarian spirit and the moral spirit of syndicalism brought Italian socialists back within the Mazzinian orbit.

Of great importance, too, was nationalism, a new movement then just coming to the fore. Our Italian nationalism was less literary and more political in character than the similar movement in France, because with us it was attached to the old historic Right which had a long political tradition. The new nationalism differed from the old Right in the stress it laid on the idea of "nation;" but it was at one with the Right in regarding the State as the necessary premise to the individual rights and values. It was the special achievement of nationalism to rekindle faith in the nation in Italian hearts, to arouse the country against parliamentary socialism, and to lead an open attack on Freemasonry,

before which the Italian bourgeoisie was terrifiedly prostrating itself. Syndicalists, nationalists, idealists succeeded, between them, in bringing the great majority of Italian youth back to the spirit of Mazzini.

Official, legal, parliamentary Italy, the Italy that was anti-Mazzinian and anti-idealistic, stood against all this, finding its leader in a man of unfailing political intuition, and master as well of the political mechanism of the country, a man sceptical of all high-sounding words, impatient of complicated concepts, ironical, cold, hard-headed, practical — what Mazzini would have called a “shrewd materialist.” In the persons, indeed, of Mazzini and Giolitti, we may find a picture of the two aspects of pre-war Italy, of that irreconcilable duality which paralyzed the vitality of the country and which the Great War was to solve.

## v

The effect of the war seemed at first to be quite in an opposite sense — to mark the beginning of a general *débâcle* of the Italian State and of the moral forces that must underlie any State. If entrance into the war had been a triumph of ideal Italy over materialistic Italy, the advent of peace seemed to give ample justification to the Neutralists who had represented the latter. After the Armistice our Allies turned their backs upon us. Our victory assumed all the aspects of a defeat. A defeatist psychology, as they say, took possession of the Italian people and expressed itself in hatred of the war, of those responsible for the war, even of our army which had won our war. An anarchical spirit of dissolution rose against all authority. The ganglia of our economic life seemed struck with mortal disease. Labor ran riot in strike after strike. The very bureaucracy seemed to align itself against the State. The measure of our spiritual dispersion was the return to power of Giolitti — the execrated Neutralist — who for five years had been held up as the exponent of an Italy which had died with the war.

But, curiously enough, it was under Giolitti that things suddenly changed in aspect, that against the Giolittian State a new State arose. Our soldiers, our genuine soldiers, men who had willed our war and fought it in full consciousness of what they were doing, had the good fortune to find as their leader a man who could express in words things that were in all their hearts and who could make those words audible above the tumult.

Mussolini had left Italian socialism in 1915 in order to be a more faithful interpreter of "the Italian People" (the name he chose for his new paper). He was one of those who saw the necessity of our war, one of those mainly responsible for our entering the war. Already as a socialist he had fought Freemasonry; and, drawing his inspiration from Sorel's syndicalism, he had assailed the parliamentary corruption of Reformist Socialism with the idealistic postulates of revolution and violence. Then, later, on leaving the party and in defending the cause of intervention, he had come to oppose the illusory fancies of proletarian internationalism with an assertion of the infrangible integrity, not only moral but economic as well, of the national organism, affirming therefore the sanctity of country for the working classes as for other classes. Mussolini was a Mazzinian of that pure-blooded breed which Mazzini seemed somehow always to find in the province of Romagna. First by instinct, later by reflection, Mussolini had come to despise the futility of the socialists who kept preaching a revolution which they had neither the power nor the will to bring to pass even under the most favorable circumstances. More keenly than anyone else he had come to feel the necessity of a State which would be a State, of a law which would be respected as law, of an authority capable of exacting obedience but at the same time able to give indisputable evidence of its worthiness so to act. It seemed incredible to Mussolini that a country capable of fighting and winning such a war as Italy had fought and won should be thrown into disorder and held at the mercy of a handful of faithless politicians.

When Mussolini founded his Fasci in Milan in March, 1919, the movement toward dissolution and negation that featured the post-war period in Italy had virtually ceased. The Fasci made their appeal to Italians who, in spite of the disappointments of the peace, continued to believe in the war, and who, in order to validate the victory which was the proof of the war's value, were bent on recovering for Italy that control over her own destinies which could come only through a restoration of discipline and a reorganization of social and political forces. From the first, the Fascist Party was not one of believers but of action. What it needed was not a platform of principles, but an idea which would indicate a goal and a road by which the goal could be reached.

The four years between 1919 and 1923 inclusive were charac-

terized by the development of the Fascist revolution through the action of "the squads." The Fascist "squads" were really the force of a State not yet born but on the way to being. In its first period, Fascist "squadrist" transgressed the law of the old régime because it was determined to suppress that régime as incompatible with the national State to which Fascism was aspiring. The March on Rome was not the beginning, it was the end of that phase of the revolution; because, with Mussolini's advent to power, Fascism entered the sphere of legality. After October 28, 1922, Fascism was no longer at war with the State; it *was* the State, looking about for the organization which would realize Fascism as a concept of State. Fascism already had control of all the instruments necessary for the upbuilding of a new State. The Italy of Giolitti had been superceded, at least so far as militant politics were concerned. Between Giolitti's Italy and the new Italy there flowed, as an imaginative orator once said in the Chamber, "a torrent of blood" that would prevent any return to the past. The century-old crisis had been solved. The war at last had begun to bear fruit for Italy.

## VI

Now to understand the distinctive essence of Fascism, nothing is more instructive than a comparison of it with the point of view of Mazzini to which I have so often referred.

Mazzini did have a political conception, but his politic was a sort of integral politic, which cannot be so sharply distinguished from morals, religion, and ideas of life as a whole, as to be considered apart from these other fundamental interests of the human spirit. If one tries to separate what is purely political from his religious beliefs, his ethical consciousness and his metaphysical concepts, it becomes impossible to understand the vast influence which his credo and his propaganda exerted. Unless we assume the unity of the whole man, we arrive not at the clarification but at the destruction of those ideas of his which proved so powerful.

In the definition of Fascism, the first point to grasp is the comprehensive, or as Fascists say, the "totalitarian" scope of its doctrine, which concerns itself not only with political organization and political tendency, but with the whole will and thought and feeling of the nation.

There is a second and equally important point. Fascism is not a

philosophy. Much less is it a religion. It is not even a political theory which may be stated in a series of formulæ. The significance of Fascism is not to be grasped in the special theses which it from time to time assumes. When on occasion it has announced a program, a goal, a concept to be realized in action, Fascism has not hesitated to abandon them when in practice these were found to be inadequate or inconsistent with the principle of Fascism. Fascism has never been willing to compromise its future. Mussolini has boasted that he is a *tempista*, that his real pride is in "good timing." He makes decisions and acts on them at the precise moment when all the conditions and considerations which make them feasible and opportune are properly matured. This is a way of saying that Fascism returns to the most rigorous meaning of Mazzini's "Thought and Action," whereby the two terms are so perfectly coincident that no thought has value which is not already expressed in action. The real "views" of the *Duce* are those which he formulates and executes at one and the same time.

Is Fascism therefore "anti-intellectual," as has been so often charged? It is eminently anti-intellectual, eminently Mazzinian, that is, if by intellectualism we mean the divorce of thought from action, of knowledge from life, of brain from heart, of theory from practice. Fascism is hostile to all Utopian systems which are destined never to face the test of reality. It is hostile to all science and all philosophy which remain matters of mere fancy or intelligence. It is not that Fascism denies value to culture, to the higher intellectual pursuits by which thought is invigorated as a source of action. Fascist anti-intellectualism holds in scorn a product peculiarly typical of the educated classes in Italy: the *leterato* — the man who plays with knowledge and with thought without any sense of responsibility for the practical world. It is hostile not so much to culture as to bad culture, the culture which does not educate, which does not make men, but rather creates pedants and aesthetes, egotists in a word, men morally and politically indifferent. It has no use, for instance, for the man who is "above the conflict" when his country or its important interests are at stake.

By virtue of its repugnance for "intellectualism," Fascism prefers not to waste time constructing abstract theories about itself. But when we say that it is not a system or a doctrine we must not conclude that it is a blind praxis or a purely instinctive

method. If by system or philosophy we mean a living thought, a principle of universal character daily revealing its inner fertility and significance, then Fascism is a perfect system, with a solidly established foundation and with a rigorous logic in its development; and all who feel the truth and the vitality of the principle work day by day for its development, now doing, now undoing, now going forward, now retracing their steps, according as the things they do prove to be in harmony with the principle or to deviate from it.

And we come finally to a third point.

The Fascist system is not a political system, but it has its center of gravity in politics. Fascism came into being to meet serious problems of politics in post-war Italy. And it presents itself as a political method. But in confronting and solving political problems it is carried by its very nature, that is to say by its method, to consider moral, religious, and philosophical questions and to unfold and demonstrate the comprehensive totalitarian character peculiar to it. It is only after we have grasped the political character of the Fascist principle that we are able adequately to appreciate the deeper concept of life which underlies that principle and from which the principle springs. The political doctrine of Fascism is not the whole of Fascism. It is rather its more prominent aspect and in general its most interesting one.

## VII

The politic of Fascism revolves wholly about the concept of the national State; and accordingly it has points of contact with nationalist doctrines, along with distinctions from the latter which it is important to bear in mind.

Both Fascism and nationalism regard the State as the foundation of all rights and the source of all values in the individuals composing it. For the one as for the other the State is not a consequence — it is a principle. But in the case of nationalism, the relation which individualistic liberalism, and for that matter socialism also, assumed between individual and State is inverted. Since the State is a principle, the individual becomes a consequence — he is something which finds an antecedent in the State: the State limits him and determines his manner of existence, restricting his freedom, binding him to a piece of ground whereon he was born, whereon he must live and will die. In the case of

Fascism, State and individual are one and the same things, or rather, they are inseparable terms of a necessary synthesis.

Nationalism, in fact, founds the State on the concept of nation, the nation being an entity which transcends the will and the life of the individual because it is conceived as objectively existing apart from the consciousness of individuals, existing even if the individual does nothing to bring it into being. For the nationalist, the nation exists not by virtue of the citizen's will, but as datum, a fact, of nature.

For Fascism, on the contrary, the State is a wholly spiritual creation. It is a national State, because, from the Fascist point of view, the nation itself is a creation of the mind and is not a material presupposition, is not a datum of nature. The nation, says the Fascist, is never really made; neither, therefore, can the State attain an absolute form, since it is merely the nation in the latter's concrete, political manifestation. For the Fascist, the State is always *in fieri*. It is in our hands, wholly; whence our very serious responsibility towards it.

But this State of the Fascists which is created by the consciousness and the will of the citizen, and is not a force descending on the citizen from above or from without, cannot have toward the mass of the population the relationship which was presumed by nationalism.

Nationalism identified State with Nation, and made of the nation an entity preëxisting, which needed not to be created but merely to be recognized or known. The nationalists, therefore, required a ruling class of an intellectual character, which was conscious of the nation and could understand, appreciate and exalt it. The authority of the State, furthermore, was not a product but a presupposition. It could not depend on the people — rather the people depended on the State and on the State's authority as the source of the life which they lived and apart from which they could not live. The nationalistic State was, therefore, an aristocratic State, enforcing itself upon the masses through the power conferred upon it by its origins.

The Fascist State, on the contrary, is a people's state, and, as such, the democratic State *par excellence*. The relationship between State and citizen (not this or that citizen, but all citizens) is accordingly so intimate that the State exists only as, and in so far as, the citizen causes it to exist. Its formation therefore is the formation of a consciousness of it in individuals, in the masses.

Hence the need of the Party, and of all the instruments of propaganda and education which Fascism uses to make the thought and will of the *Duce* the thought and will of the masses. Hence the enormous task which Fascism sets itself in trying to bring the whole mass of the people, beginning with the little children, inside the fold of the Party.

On the popular character of the Fascist State likewise depends its greatest social and constitutional reform — the foundation of the Corporations of Syndicates. In this reform Fascism took over from syndicalism the notion of the moral and educational function of the syndicate. But the Corporations of Syndicates were necessary in order to reduce the syndicates to State discipline and make them an expression of the State's organism from within. The Corporation of Syndicates are a device through which the Fascist State goes looking for the individual in order to create itself through the individual's will. But the individual it seeks is not the abstract political individual whom the old liberalism took for granted. He is the only individual who can ever be found, the individual who exists as a specialized productive force, and who, by the fact of his specialization, is brought to unite with other individuals of his same category and comes to belong with them to the one great economic unit which is none other than the nation.

This great reform is already well under way. Toward it nationalism, syndicalism, and even liberalism itself, were already tending in the past. For even liberalism was beginning to criticize the older forms of political representation, seeking some system of organic representation which would correspond to the structural reality of the State.

The Fascist conception of liberty merits passing notice. The *Duce* of Fascism once chose to discuss the theme of "Force or Consent?;" and he concluded that the two terms are inseparable, that the one implies the other and cannot exist apart from the other; that, in other words, the authority of the State and the freedom of the citizen constitute a continuous circle wherein authority presupposes liberty and liberty authority. For freedom can exist only within the State, and the State means authority. But the State is not an entity hovering in the air over the heads of its citizens. It is one with the personality of the citizen. Fascism, indeed, envisages the contrast not as between liberty and authority, but as between a true, a concrete liberty which exists, and an abstract, illusory liberty which cannot exist.

Liberalism broke the circle above referred to, setting the individual against the State and liberty against authority. What the liberal desired was liberty as against the State, a liberty which was a limitation of the State; though the liberal had to resign himself, as the lesser of the evils, to a State which was a limitation on liberty. The absurdities inherent in the liberal concept of freedom were apparent to liberals themselves early in the Nineteenth Century. It is no merit of Fascism to have again indicated them. Fascism has its own solution of the paradox of liberty and authority. The authority of the State is absolute. It does not compromise, it does not bargain, it does not surrender any portion of its field to other moral or religious principles which may interfere with the individual conscience. But on the other hand, the State becomes a reality only in the consciousness of its individuals. And the Fascist corporative State supplies a representative system more sincere and more in touch with realities than any other previously devised and is therefore freer than the old liberal State.