

## The Embodiment of ‘Us and Them’: Fascist Experience in a Traumatized World

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**ABSTRACT.** – This paper represents an attempt to demonstrate that ‘us vs them,’ the binary that lies at the heart of fascist experience, is embodied. The authors suggest that fascist experience is not merely political but that it infiltrates many aspects of our personal and professional lives. To accomplish their aims the authors focus on two inextricably intertwined strands of psychoanalytic theorizing: traumatic experience and human embodiment. Clinical vignettes illustrating the challenges faced by analysts in working with patients who support a fascist-leaning leader are provided. The paper concludes by suggesting that the emphasis on argument and dialogue in relational psychoanalysis counters the seductions of fascist experience.

*Key words:* Embodiment; trauma; fascist experience; us vs them; relational psychoanalysis.

In his forward to the second edition of his 1941 book, *Escape from Freedom*, Erich Fromm (1969, p. xiii) explained that 25 years after his book was first published, the fears that led to the rise of fascism ‘have not only continued but have greatly increased.’ In his words ‘...modern man<sup>1</sup> still is anxious and tempted to surrender his freedom to dictators of all kinds...’ Sadly, the 52 years that have passed since he wrote these words have not made his observation any less true. The rise of ultra-nationalism in the United States and many parts of Europe along with the ascendance of authoritarian leaders has led a number of political and philosophical theorists such as Jason Stanley<sup>2</sup> (2018) to examine the threat of resurgent fascism.

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<sup>1</sup>We recognize that the designation, ‘man,’ was used by Fromm to refer to all humans.

<sup>2</sup>Jason Stanley is an American philosopher, currently Jacob Urowsky Professor of Philosophy at Yale University in New Haven, CT. He is best known for his contributions to the philosophy of language and epistemology.

Having become aware that fears stirred by this threat pervade our analytic practices as well as our personal lives, we feel called to view what we consider ‘fascist experience’ from a psychoanalytic perspective in the hope of better understanding its psychological underpinnings. In doing so we join with the increasing numbers of contemporary writers who emphasize the futility of trying to address the suffering of psychoanalytic patients without considering the historical and sociopolitical embedment of their lives. As Nancy Hollander (2017) observes, any attempt to restrict our gaze to the individual and his or her family ‘misses the larger ideological and institutional contexts that... saturate the psychoanalytic process’ (p. 636).

We have come to believe that no one is immune to the threat and temptations of fascist experience, and we are no exceptions. Awareness of our own vulnerability to fascist experience became unmistakably apparent in our work with patients who support those we regard as fascist-leaning leaders. As we describe below, we found ourselves tempted to employ some of the measures that we regard as the hallmarks of fascist experience when working with these patients. What distinguishes this article from those of other psychoanalytic writers is not only that we regard fascist experience as pervading life beyond the political realm but perhaps, most importantly, that we regard fascist experience as profoundly embodied. As we describe below, the embodiment of fascist experience appears most vividly in the ‘us vs them’ binary.

In his analysis of Hitler’s writings, Fromm (1941/1969) found two trends that he believed to be fundamental to the authoritarian character: ‘the craving for power over men and the longing for submission to an overwhelmingly strong outside power’ (p. 235). He was both pessimistic and optimistic about the endurance of these trends. On the one hand, he feared an ‘escape into new bondage,’ while, on the other, he saw the possibility in modern societies ‘for the full expression of man’s intellectual, sensuous, and emotional potentialities’ (p. 237). He believed that psychoanalysis could enhance the likelihood of such expression.

Our aims in this paper are very much in keeping with Fromm’s insofar as we also believe that psychoanalysis can greatly help to make sense of fascist experience in today’s world. In what follows we focus on two inextricably intertwined strands of contemporary psychoanalytic theorizing that seem to shed illuminating light on fascist experience as it is manifested in many facets of our lives. The first strand involves an understanding of traumatic experience as confrontations with uncertainty accompanied by strenuous efforts to make going-on-being (Winnicott, 1965) feel more certain (Brothers, 2008) and the second involves a focus on embodied emotional experiences that intensify the binary of us and them (Sletvold, 2014).

## Wilhelm Reich's analysis of fascism

Fromm was by no means the first analyst to undertake an examination of fascism. In 1933 when the Nazis were first gaining power in Germany, Wilhelm Reich published his book, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. By examining the economic and ideological structure of German society between 1928 and 1933, the book attempts to understand what leads masses of people to embrace fascist leaders who promote practices and policies that work against their interests. Reich offered one possible way to understand this. He suggests that fascism is an 'amalgam between rebellious emotions and reactionary social ideas' that overrides their individual needs and concerns (Reich, 1933, p. xiv). In Hitlerian fascism this contradiction is even reflected in the name, *National Socialism*.

Reich makes the point that the success of a fascist movement does not rest on its use of arguments and, for that reason, it cannot be reached with arguments. He notes that the rally speeches of the National Socialists (Nazis) given between the years of 1928 and 1933 were 'very conspicuous for their skillfulness in operating upon the *emotions* of the individuals in the masses and of avoiding relevant arguments as much as possible' (Reich, 1933, p. 34).

Since, in our view, *emotions are fundamentally embodied experiences*, we are convinced that the powerful appeal of fascism derives from its mastery of embodied communication. As Jason Stanley (2018), remarks: 'It is a core tenet of fascist politics that the goal of oratory should not be to convince the intellect, but to sway the will.' He found the following quote by an anonymous author in a 1925 Italian fascist magazine: 'The mysticism of Fascism is the proof of its triumph. Reasoning does not attract, emotion does' (p. 55).

In his last book, *Dear Zealots*, Amos Oz<sup>3</sup> (2018) who writes about what he calls 'fanaticism' in ways that are interchangeable with what we are calling fascist experience, simply states: 'The fanatic does not argue' (p. 3). Later he adds:

"It is not the volume that defines you as a fanatic, but rather, primarily, your tolerance - or lack thereof - for your opponents' voices." (Amos Oz p. 2018, p. 14)

In keeping with Reich, we conceive of fascist experience as a feature of relational life that is widely shared. Reich observes:

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<sup>3</sup>Amos Oz was an Israeli writer, novelist, journalist, and intellectual. He was also a professor of Hebrew literature at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. From 1967 onwards, Oz was a prominent advocate of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“My character-analytic experiences have convinced me that there is not a single individual who does not bear the elements of fascist feeling and thinking in his structure. As a political movement fascism differs from other reactionary parties as it is *born and championed by masses of people*.” (Reich, 1933/1942/1988, pp. xiii-xiv)

If Reich is correct in asserting that all humans are vulnerable to fascist feeling and thinking, what might we have in common that sets the stage for such experiences? The answer, we believe, lies in the fact that we all live in a traumatized and traumatizing world. Living through many rapid-fire upheavals, we cannot help being reminded of the terrifying uncertainty of our going-on-being. It is no wonder that we are tempted by opportunities to feel more certain about maintaining our vulnerable senses of self. Since complexity tends to increase the experience of uncertainty, we tend to search for ways to simplify our experience in the hope of reducing uncertainty. As Oz (2018) explains: ‘As the questions grow harder and more complicated, people yearn for simpler answers, one-sentence answers, answers that point unhesitatingly to a culprit who can be blamed for all our suffering, answers that promise if we only eradicate the villains, all our troubles will vanish’ (p. 5).

The creation of binaries is a tried and true means of providing simplified answers to complex questions and no binary has more power over us than that of ‘us vs them.’ Racism, sexism, xenophobia, and virtually every form of political malevolence depends on it. It is our contention that fascist experience which revolves largely around the us-them polarity, represent an extreme effort to find certainty in a world trembling with uncertainty. We agree with Reich’s observation that the us-them of racism precedes fascism. He writes:

“The racial theory is not a product of fascism. On the contrary: it is fascism that is a product of racial hatred and is its politically organized expression. It follows from this that there is a German, Italian, Spanish, Anglo-Saxon, Jewish, and Arabian fascism.” (Reich, 1933, p. xiv)

### The ‘Us-Them’ binary as embodied experience

We further contend that it is impossible to appreciate the extent to which fascist experience functions in our lives without understanding it from a body-based perspective. We contrast body-based understanding from concept-based understanding that ignores the essential wholeness of human beings; *our minds are inseparable from our bodies*. While it is hard to think of the Nazis in Germany and other fascist movements without conjuring up images of stiff-armed salutes and goose-stepping soldiers, we believe that less obvious manifestations of rigidity are also embodied. In our clinical experience we have found that, in the course of analytic treatment, our trau-

matized patients show increasing bodily flexibility and greater spontaneity and grace in their movements; their behavior becomes less ritualistic and their thinking more open and creative. Fascist experience tends to involve greater rigidity of our bodies and less flexibility of our minds.

To explain the 'us-them' dichotomy from a body-based perspective we need to understand how humans affect one another emotionally. We do not only react emotionally *to* one another, we also react emotionally *with* one another (Sletvold, 2014, 2016). This means that whenever humans meet, two kinds of emotional reactions take place in our bodies. The first involves *how* we are affected by the other - *e.g.*, does the other make us happy, afraid or angry? This kind of emotional reaction is one we share with many other species. The other type of emotional reaction involves feeling some of what others feel. By way of automatic inner imitation we can, to varying degrees, feel some of another person's complex feelings in our own bodies. In our view, this automatic imitation of the emotions of others constitutes the basis for empathy. The degree to which we react emotionally to or with the other changes with the context and our own reactions to it.

In our view it is the ability to experience a situation from both our own and the others' perspective that makes dialogue and argument possible. This ability is easily compromised when conflict increases and discussion leads to animosity and, in extreme situations, violence. When we are able to move fluidly between our own perspective, a sense of 'I' on the one side, and our empathic grasp of the other's perspective, a sense of 'you' on the other, a foundation is laid down for a sense of 'we' (Sletvold, 2014). This sense of 'we' allows for the recognition of our difference from others as well as similarity to them.

The breakdown of the sense of 'we' is typical of any emotionally stressful or traumatic situation. In these situations, we often feel the need to give priority to our own well-being, and, consequently, we may not have the luxury of empathically seeing from the other's point of view. In relatively benign situations this reaction is only temporary, and we are soon able to reestablish contact with the other's felt state. Doing so tends to restore our sense of 'we.'

After severe or longstanding traumatic experiences our ability to reestablish a sense of 'we' may be permanently damaged. Instead of fluidly shifting between 'I' and 'you,' we may either prioritize our own perspective with little regard for the other's (think of Heinz Kohut's, 1971, 1977, 1985) descriptions of the severe narcissistic vulnerability of some grandiose individuals) or we may largely relinquish our own perspective in favor of some other's. Bernard Brandchaft (2007) has characterized this unconscious effort to adapt one's own views and feelings to those required by a needed other as 'pathological accommodation.' Both stances tend to have embodied signatures. For example, the person who perceives the world only in terms of 'I' may feel himself or herself to be bigger than others, and, because of the attitudes and postures he or she adopts, may be experienced by others as occupying more space. In

contrast, the person who tends to favor another person's perspective may feel smaller than others and may be perceived as shrunken.

At times of great societal stress a sense of 'we,' for some people, may be based only on sameness. This 'we' then becomes 'us' and all others who we are not experienced as the same as us become 'them.' At such times, our embodied feelings change dramatically. When we feel connected to those we view as 'us,' we tend to experience a sense of calmness, safety, openness and even, at times, elation; when viewing ourselves with respect to those we consider 'them,' we tend to experience fear, hostility and withdrawal.

In a similar way the novelist Karl Ove Knausgaard's (2011/19) explores Hitler's ideology from the point of view of 'I,' 'you' and 'we.' He argues that language itself is a social activity that presupposes an 'I' and a 'you' that together makes a 'we.'

"What made the atrocities of the Third Reich possible was an extreme reinforcement of the we, and the attendant weakening of the I, which lessened the force of resistance against the gradual dehumanization and expulsion of the non-we, which is to say the Jews... within only a few years the voice of conscience in Germany went from thou shalt not kill to its reverse, thou shalt kill, as Hannah Arendt points out." (p. 513)

According to Knausgaard, the way this happened is displayed in its purest form in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, 'which contains no 'you,' only an 'I,' and a 'we,' which makes it possible to turn 'they' into 'it.' In 'you' was decency. In 'it' was evil. But it was 'we' who carried it out' (p. 882).

We believe that Knausgaard highlights the crucial distinction between a 'we' that is based on 'I' and 'you,' and a 'we' without a 'you'. The former is shaped by an embodied connectedness to one or more other persons, as is the case in a real friendship. The 'we' without a 'you,' (which we prefer to call 'us') is exemplified by certain isolated individuals who rarely feel that they are connected to others except when they are in the presence of a fascist leader. At such times, they may experience a sense of us-them connectedness.

In what follows we use our body-based perspective to examine other aspects of fascist experiences that have been identified by Reich, Kohut, Stanley and what Oz calls 'fanaticism' in order to show how they are embodied and how they reflect the need to find certainty in a world of traumatizing uncertainty.

## The powerful leader

We start with the finding that fascist experience involves allegiance to a dominant, usually male, leader. Reich (1933/42, p.88) observed that the more helpless the 'mass-individual' becomes, the more pronounced is his

identification with the 'führer'. He saw this inclination to identify as the psychological basis of national narcissism, the self-confidence that individuals derive from the leader's claims about the 'greatness of the nation.' The misery of the 'material and sexual situation is so overshadowed by the exalting idea of belonging to a master race and having a brilliant führer that, as time goes on, he ceases to realize how completely he has sunk to a position of insignificant, blind allegiance' (p. 63).

Perhaps the binary at work here is less 'us and them' than 'us and him.' Leaders in fascist groups may be both like and unlike their followers in many respects. But whatever they have in common, one difference stands out: fascist leaders, with the full support of their followers, hold and manipulate power over the group. And that power closely resembles that of fathers in male-dominated families.

Stanley (2018), noting that patriarchy is strategically central to fascist politics, observes: 'In fascist society, the leader of a nation is analogous to the father in the patriarchal family... The patriarchal father's authority derives from his strength and strength is the chief authoritarian value' (p. 6). We believe that the longing to experience a strong, idealizable figure organizes much of fascist experience. Heinz Kohut (1971, 1977, 1985) has taught us that experiencing ourselves as merged with an omniscient, guiding, protective figure is essential to the development of a relatively stable sense of self. Moreover, Kohut has shown how, in early life, such experiences are bodily in nature. Describing the idealized parent as 'somebody strong and knowledgeable and calm...with whom I can temporarily merge, who will uplift me when I am upset,' he observes:

"Originally, that is an actual uplifting of the baby by the mother, later that becomes an uplifting feeling of looking at a great man or woman and enjoying him or her, of following in his or her footsteps..." (Kohut, 1985, p. 226-227)

What we experience as joyful and pleasurable in our bodies as children is remembered, if only on an unconscious level, throughout life. And those who have missed the joy and pleasure of being held and protected by loving parents may spend their lives searching for parental substitutes. We believe that fascist leaders tap into embodied longings for missed or lost experiences of being physically lifted up by powerfully protective parents. Being in the presence of such figures provides the quintessential feeling of certainty about one's going on being.

Kohut described charismatic and messianic leaders as people who convey a 'pervasive sense of infallibility' and 'display apparently unshakable self-confidence and voice their opinions with absolute certainty.' (Kohut, 1969-1970/1978, p.108). We believe that such leaders convey their certainty in the ways they speak, move, and hold their bodies. It is just these embodied characteristics that persuade the followers of fascist leaders that

feelings of the safety, comfort, joy they knew - or missed - in childhood will once again be theirs.

Another way that fascist leaders use embodied means to re-establish a sense of certainty about going-on-being involves their ability to stoke long simmering but unexpressed anger in their followers. All feelings are embodied, but it is the special tendency of anger to turn into destructive aggression that makes it so potent among fascist groups. And might does not only make right, it also makes certain (Brothers, 2008).

Many have noted the lack of empathy in fascist leaders (Kohut, 1985; Stanley, 2018, p. xv). Their limited capacity for empathy leads to the dehumanization of others and increasingly more inhumane treatment of them. But the fascist leader is not just a raging brute. His exquisite sensitivity to the social scene is accompanied by exquisite sensitivity to the emotional needs of his followers. It is this refined sensitivity that allows the fascist leader to exploit the fears of his followers.

Along with Zygmunt Baumann (2008), we believe that today's economic fears have been inflamed by the frantic swirl of our 'liquid times,' in which, as he notes: 'progress no longer evokes 'radical optimism' but 'an insomnia full of nightmares of 'being left behind'. Nightmare terrors of being left behind are often stirred when others, who were not previously seen as threats to one's sense of dominance in society, such as minorities and women, seem to streak ahead, leaving one in the dust. It also seems likely to us that because the rapid changes of our liquid society have forced people to find economic opportunities far from their places of birth, communities have dissolved and bonds of friendship have been torn. With the increase of uncertainty about finding self-sustaining connectedness, many people may well have become more vulnerable to the 'us vs them' binary.

### Worshipping the 'Tough Guy' (DB)

A young male patient, I'll call him Ben, who was diagnosed as suffering from bi-polar disorder, initially entered therapy to fulfill a court order. He had been arrested for injuring a fellow bus passenger when a verbal dispute devolved into physical violence. Viciously abused by an older brother, subjected to the raging outbursts of his alcoholic father, bullied in high school and stunned by the sudden death of his mother, the young man was also at the mercy of frequent and intense alternations of depression and mania. He complained that medications prescribed by psychiatrists during his inpatient hospitalizations had led to severe and unremitting digestive problems that greatly interfered with his social life. On entering treatment, he frequently expressed contempt for my 'soft-hearted-soft-headed' approach, which contrasted with his worshipful adherence to Donald Trump as a



'tough guy who can't be pushed around.' He also subscribed to a number of far-right conspiracy theories involving violent threats to the country posed by various minority groups.

Although his painful bodily symptoms were dramatically relieved following a session in which he broke into tears upon describing the death of his mother and confessing to sorely missing her, he insisted that 'crying will not cure me - it just makes me more depressed.' He abruptly left treatment when he understood that a deepening involvement in his therapeutic relationship might involve experiencing more painful feelings that he considers signs of weakness and vulnerability and which (I supposed) might lead him to question the veracity of his fascist beliefs.

My reaction to his leaving was equal parts disappointment and relief. I had often experienced enormous tension in my body during my sessions with Ben. At times I would sit very still, echoing Ben's stiff, unmoving way of occupying his chair. Even the muscles in his face seemed to have been set in a perpetual scowl. At other times, I found myself using rather exaggerated gestures as I moved in my seat, perhaps as a way of encouraging him to loosen up.

Although I had felt a great sense of compassion for his traumatic suffering, I had often struggled with a strong desire to convince him that his views were wrongheaded and dangerous. When he ended the treatment, I congratulated myself on managing to keep my views to myself. It had not occurred to me that I was as locked into an us-them view of the political situation as Ben was. I felt as much disgust and contempt for those on the other side of the political divide as he did for those on mine.

It was only when Ben surprised me by returning to treatment that I became aware of the intensity with which I had held my 'us-them' stance. Although Ben initially spoke much less frequently of his allegiance to Trump's views and his belief in conspiracy theories, he now seemed to experience me as embodying many of the qualities that he once attributed to Trump. He clearly saw me as not only uniquely qualified to help him, but also as influential, and powerful in the world. 'You are the only person on the planet who understands, me.' 'You are my only friend in the world.' 'I found out that you travel around the world giving talks. Lots of people look up to you.'

I initially welcomed Ben's return and believed that working through his inevitable disappointments in his idealized view of me would further his healing. However, as the intensity of his somatic symptoms diminished and his moods became more stable, he once again became intensely interested in politics. Enraged by the impeachment hearings, Ben spoke mockingly of the desperate 'witch hunt' undertaken by Trump's opponents. He seemed to forget that he had once reviled me as 'a soft-headed liberal shrink' and now spoke as if I shared his political views. When he announced that he had

begun to volunteer with an ultra-right-wing group to promote Trump's reelection, feelings of rage and contempt overtook me. My compassion dissolved and I wondered if I could go on working with him. Should I remind him that I was opposed to everything the group represented, I wondered?

It was only after the storm of my outrage subsided that it struck me that although my strongly held political convictions were diametrically opposed to those held by Ben, I was myself veering into the neighborhood of fascist experience. For example, I was as little interested in opening myself to arguments favored by Trump's supporters as Ben was in listening to arguments against these views. I was as blinded by my strong emotions which included rage and shame as he was. And, while I had not submitted myself to an authoritarian leader, as Ben had done, I no longer felt that I was as immune to the seduction of someone who gave voice to my deeply held convictions as I had once believed. What distinguished my reaction from Ben's was my willingness to reflect on his experience, my own, and to consider our relationship, our growing sense of 'we,' in terms of the strains of our opposing emotionally charged political views.

While there is no happy ending to our story in view, we are continuing to deepen our sense of embodied connectedness. I am hopeful that this will also diminish our mutual vulnerability to fascist experience.

### Confrontation with fascist memory (JS)

I became vulnerable to fascist experience in my therapeutic encounter with Tom, a young professional who requested therapy to help him overcome experiences of incapacitating burnout. He mentioned emotional conflicts in interpersonal relationships, which I soon came to attribute to a complicated trauma history involving his emotionally disturbed parents. Because of his intense anxiety, muscular tensions and body pain, I helped him attend to bodily tensions and reactions in sessions.

To my chagrin, however, Tom spent much time in his sessions expressing his admiration for Trump and his anger and contempt for what he referred to as 'the extremely stupid liberal and leftwing cultural elite.' Initially I was at a loss as to how I might respond. Since I see myself as liberal and left leaning, I felt personally challenged by his views. At the same time, I was afraid that if I openly voiced my opposition to them, our analytic 'we' would break down. I feared that the analysis would turn into a political discussion and attention would be drawn away from Tom's pressing concerns. At the same time, I wondered if his need for certainty, his maintenance of an 'us-them' dichotomy and his antagonism toward political enemies might partially be a consequence of his trauma history. Given these considerations, I decided to postpone raising the matter of our political disagreements.

Tom abruptly decided to terminate treatment, citing 'changed priorities' in his life. However, I now suspect that his decision to terminate was largely caused by our unaddressed political conflict. After the treatment ended, I realized that I had experienced much more resentment and anger about Tom's attitudes than I had allowed myself to feel consciously during our work together. I now imagine that he had become aware of my feelings insofar as they were transmitted bodily rather than through words.

Thinking about our relationship in hindsight it also strikes me that I was one-sidedly focused on his subjective complaints at the expense of a focus on our emotional connectedness. Although he talked about feeling emotionally disconnected from other people, I was reluctant to explore our disconnectedness. I now suspect that I failed to call attention to our differences because I had avoided focusing on his bodily appearance. He had an oddly elegant posture and way of dressing that called to mind photos I have seen of 'Hitlerjugend.' Because this perception put me in touch with my abhorrence of Nazism, it may well have interfered with my attempts to empathize with his predicament.

There is no way of knowing what would have happened if I had been more aware of my complicated and negative 'counter-transference,' my own embodied sense of 'us vs, them,' but I have little doubt that it contributed to the premature termination.

## Psychoanalysis as anti-fascism

If argument and dialogue are silenced in fascist groups, they are given resounding voice within the relational theories that now predominate in psychoanalysis. Many prominent analysts stress the importance of argument and dialogue in their writings. Stephen Mitchell, for one, wrote:

"...all theorists, like all analysts, are participant observers, operating in an interpersonal field, a social and intellectual milieu, in which one theory is in response to others, in which the development of concepts takes shape in dialogue and opposition to others." (Mitchell, 1984, p. 260)

A number of analysts have drawn on the work of philosophers as guides to a dialogic approach. Louis Aron (1996) referring to Martin Buber's writings on many aspects of the 'interhuman,' observes that 'an emphasis on mutuality and negotiation should not be taken to imply a conception of the psychoanalytic relationship in which discord is minimized between patient and analyst'. He adds: 'Mutuality does not mean agreement or premature consensus. Buber argued that a genuine disagreement with the other could be quite affirming and genuine dialogue between people may include a conflict in viewpoints' (p. 157).

Donna Orange (2011), another strong advocate for dialogue in psychoanalysis, has supported her contentions by referring to the work of Buber, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein. ‘In a genuine dialogue’, she writes, ‘people do attempt to convince each other, but they always listen with the expectation that the other can teach them something. Under this condition, understanding can emerge in the play of conversation’ (pp.104-105). She adds, ‘...conversation, or dialogue, has a double function. Though oriented toward increased understanding... It’s process disquiets..., disturbs, and unsettles our previous points of view and settled convictions’ (p. 105).

If we, as analysts, are able to engage in dialogues among ourselves, our supervisees and our patients, we may resist the lures of fascist experience that abound in our work. Doing so is probably least difficult when colleagues, supervisees and patients express their points of view, even those that counter our own, in a forthright way. But perhaps one of our most important analytic tasks is to attend carefully when others voice agreement with us but show through their bodies that they disagree. And, it is equally important to attend to our own bodies for indications that we experience those who disagree with us as representatives of ‘them.’

It is in the realm of body-to-body conversations that the power to transcend fascism resides. If we remember that although we may wish to belong to one tribe, one ‘us,’ our strength, as Oz (2018) insists, ‘is in being united around our right to be different from each other’ (p. 54). We must find the courage to enter into dialogues with ‘them’ or risk the destruction of our precious planet.

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