

"trying to define 'fascism' is like trying to nail jelly to the wall" - Ian Kershaw

This quote from historian Sir Ian Kershaw sums up the issues with defining fascism very nicely. If you ask 10 different people for definitions you'll get 10 different answers. If you google the definition of fascism you'll probably find the Wikipedia page for fascism which says "Fascism is a form of far-right, authoritarian ultranationalism, characterized by dictatorial power, forcible suppression of opposition, and strong regimentation of society and the economy that rose to prominence in early 20th-century Europe." Now for what I would imagine would be most people this is a fine definition, however scratch beneath the surface and it's clear that defining fascism is a lot easier said than done. I mean heck under Wikipedia's ["Definitions of fascism"](#) under "By scholars" there are 14 possible definitions. Scholars aren't even sure if fascism is pro or anti capitalism.

I'm making this post in response to two breadtubers, ContraPoints and Vaush. The former to respond to ContraPoints, "How to recognize a fascist" and the latter Vaushs general use of the term. ContraPoints video I think has good intentions but I think possibly does more harm than good, and might actually play right into the hand of the very people ContraPoints is trying to point out. In the video, ContraPoints points out many ways fascists try to mask or hide their beliefs. However, when the video starts we already have an issue, contraPoints seems to be of the belief that only white people have ever believed in fascism. The truth is that many different people have toyed with the ideology. There is an essay written by George Orwell that I'm drawing some inspiration from [come](#) check it out if you are interested. In the essay, Orwell points out many issues I have with pointing out fascism today but the one I will focus on now is, as he points out, "Portugal or the various South American dictatorships" could be described as fascist. Although this doesn't seem bad as this only needs to apply to us here in the USA I think it is because it implies that only white people have ever been and could be fascist, which as I just pointed out isn't true.

The Next issue I have is with the nature of "dog whistles" for those who don't know a dog whistle is a symbol or action that at first glance looks like it has one meaning be actually has another. I take issue with this idea but first, this is that it is true for all the wrong reasons. Symbols and actions do have different meanings to different people. The most famous example would probably be the Swastika. What started out as a symbol meaning "good luck" and was a marker for Buddhist temples was taken by the most evil people and turned this symbol from one wishing good luck into one associated with the darkest atrocities ever committed. My point is that the same symbol or action can have different meanings to different people. Now this isn't unusual but the issue come in when you start assigning motives to those people based on your interpretation of what you think that symbol means to them. Now, without enough information, this is impossible to figure out. Now

if someone has a nazi pepe frog in their profile and talks about the "14 words" that might be enough to go off of. But, if say you say two deaf people signing and one of them does the "ok" hand symbol you probably don't have enough info to call them out. Now would probably be a good time to point out that most Dog whistles or at least the most popular ones were practical given to fascists and not made in their communities. Of all people, [PewDiePie](#) made a video pointing this out. This gets to something Orwell points out the label fascist doesn't have a clear meaning, "It will be seen that, as used, the word 'Fascism' is almost entirely meaningless. In conversation, of course, it is used even more wildly than in print. I have heard it applied to farmers, shopkeepers, Social Credit, corporal punishment, fox-hunting, bull-fighting, the 1922 Committee, the 1941 Committee, Kipling, Gandhi, Chiang Kai-Shek, homosexuality, Priestley's broadcasts, Youth Hostels, astrology, women, dogs and I do not know what else." Because it lacks a clear academic definition but has a very poisonous implications. And because of this when someone labels something fascist it's more of a value judgment than anything based in academia. When someone disagrees with someone on a subject that they are particularly passionate about they would call them a fascist. If both Hitler and the average conservative can both be called "fascist" the word lacks meaning. This isn't to say we shouldn't point out a genuine fascist when we find one but what I am saying is that when we do find one we should probably use a finer brush. Because if we don't it does play right into their hands, ContraPoints pointed out several dog whistles that are used but as I just pointed out knowing only them is a pointless endeavor, you need more information. Information you can't get so you make the only call you can call everyone who uses a possible dog whistle a fascist. A lot of ignorant people get caught in the crossfire, those people claiming the obvious claim "I'm not a fascist" and real fascists get to call their accusers paranoid. Playing right into their hands. It's a lose-lose, If you don't call them out their horrid ideas spread like fire in a gasoline-soaked forest. If you do call them out and often miss they gain sympathy and get to call their accusers paranoid. ContraPoints even admits to this saying, "yes, I have become crazy". The final issue I have before I mention Vaush is near the end of ContraPoints video, where the claim is implied that the left equivocates to fascism doesn't exist saying in reference to the "alt-left" commit made by trump after Charlottesville, "Because if you have a word for a thing, that thing must exist." there is a Washington Post op-ed that makes the claim that "[Antifa is the moral equivalent of neo-Nazis](#)". I hope to point out that violence is violence no matter who is committing it. ContraPoint points out something I kinda agree with that is fascists use both sides' rhetoric to shift the blame. So hold both sides accountable, if one side is saying "eat the rich" hold them accountable, if one side is advocating for an ethnostate hold them accountable. Make it so that both sides get their feet held to the fire.

And with that I finally get to Vaush, this is gonna be brief because I have already written a full-on essay on this topic (see above). I really just wanted to show an example of pointing out fascism

gone wrong. Vaush, claims to use Umberto Eco's "14 points" when evaluating if someone is a fascist the issue is that if you have seen the infamous "[Is vaush unironically evil](#)" video and read up to this point you will know that academic definitions are often accused of being either too broad or too narrow. Vaush claims that the 14 points operate like diagnostic criteria for mental disorders but the truth is that they really don't. The DSM-5 has set clear diagnostic criteria for every disorder and the 14 points don't in fact from the "Is vaush unironically evil" video Vaush hits half of them. So the question to be asked by both me and the creator of the video is "Is Vaush a fascist" true be told if you only went by what I have written you could make a case for it. Vaush has encouraged the use of "internationalists" as a dog whistle for socialism. But I don't think Vaush is one, only because as I have just written about fascist doesn't really have a clear meaning.

TL;DR People even the experts have no clue what fascism really is. We don't paint with a fine enough brush to be able to call it out when we do see it. ContraPoints might be playing to fascist advantage by telling people what to look out for and Vaush might (But probably isn't) unironically be a fascist.